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Luther, the Reformer

Charles E. Hay, D.D.

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# LUTHER, THE REFORMER.

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CHARLES E. HAY, D. D.

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# LUTHER, THE REFORMER.

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## PERIOD I.

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### PREPARATION FOR ACTION. A. D. 1483-1517.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### BOYHOOD.

EVEN when at the summit of his renown, Luther never hesitated to acknowledge his humble origin. His ancestors for several generations were simple peasants—not paupers, however, but owners of the soil whose cultivation furnished them a modest livelihood. His father, Hans Luder (Lothar: leader), engaged also in mining in the vicinity of his ancestral home, Möhra, on the border of the Thuringian forest, but soon after his marriage removed with his young wife, Margaret (Ziegler), to Eisleben, in search of steadier employment. Here, on Nov. 10th, 1483, they greeted with delight their first-born child, who was baptized on the same day in St. Peter's church, receiving the name Martin, it being the anniversary of that saint in the Church's calendar.

Six months later, the family settled permanently in the town of Mansfeld, a few miles distant, where the father was shortly afterwards enabled to rent two smelting furnaces, and gradually improved his temporal circumstances. We find

him a few years later occupying a responsible position in the village and its congregation. He was a sturdy son of the Church, faithful in observing all its appointed ordinances, but withal firm in maintaining his personal convictions. His wife was modest in demeanor, earnest in her piety and much given to prayer. Both were sincerely devoted to the welfare of their children, although excessively stern in the exercise of discipline. They resolved to give their son the advantage of a liberal education, and prepare him for the practice of law.

Young Martin accordingly entered the village school at a very early age. His treatment here exceeded in severity that which he had received at home. He was beaten fifteen times in one morning, as he himself relates, for failing to recite what had not been taught him. He was speaking from experience when he afterwards described the schoolmasters of that time as tyrants and executioners, from whom nothing was learned in spite of stripes, trembling, terror and tears.

It was thus in a secluded, narrow valley of the Harz Mountains, in the very centre of Germany, that the early years of the great Reformer were spent. He was here in daily contact with nature and with the simple-minded German peasantry, plain in their manners, blunt in speech, but distinguished by native honesty and devoutness of spirit. He was one of them, and even in his maturer years always felt perfectly at home in his beloved Mansfeld. He is described by one of his most intimate associates as a merry, romping boy, fond of companionship. His natural disposition may be clearly enough inferred from the originality and vivacity of his mind in later years, from his keen delight in the

works of nature, and from the unfailing humor which marks his utterances even amid the severest trials and most exhausting labors.

The poverty of his parents and the rigor of the discipline to which he was subjected seriously affected his native buoyancy of spirit. He grew exceedingly timid, and his conscience became so sensitive that he constantly upbraided himself for the slightest, and often for mere imaginary offences.

For the distress of mind which was thus occasioned, the religious teaching of the day afforded no real relief. Children were, indeed, taught the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments. On festival days the congregations joined in the singing of certain appropriate hymns, and there was some preaching in the language of the people. Luther always gratefully acknowledged the benefits which he had thus received. But the scriptural truth presented in these ways was almost lost sight of in the great mass of outward ceremonies and idle fancies.

There was a growing tendency to **saint-worship**, which threatened to leave no place for simple faith in Christ as the divine Redeemer in whom is revealed the fulness of the Father's love and mercy. Greater confidence was felt in the supposed more tender love of the Virgin Mary, who was addressed as the "Mother of God," and implored to intercede for her petitioners with her Son, who was regarded as a stern judge and ruler. At the very time of Luther's boyhood, it became a popular custom, particularly among the hardy mountaineers of that part of Germany, to address prayers especially to Anna, the mother of the Virgin Mary; and the countless hosts of minor saints were parceled out as the patrons of particular

localities, churches, persons or occupations. The minds of the young were filled with legends of the saints, some of which were really pathetic or poetic in character, but the great mass of which were mere empty, silly tales.

There prevailed among the common people of that day an implicit belief in **witchcraft**. Evil spirits were supposed to be constantly active in inflicting injuries upon cattle, crops and human beings, sending sickness, storms, hail, etc. Luther's own mother lived in constant dread of a neighbor whom she accused of bewitching her children, making them cry themselves almost to death. Thus the imagination of the lad was stored with frightful forms, and a dark cloud of ever-threatening calamity overshadowed his early life.

**Pompous processions** were used to impress the minds of the multitude with the majesty of the Church, and vast multitudes were induced to join in **pilgrimages** to supposed sacred places, bearing offerings for various images or relics of ancient saints which were said to be endowed with miraculous healing power.

Even when the Lord's Prayer, Creed, etc., were taught by the monks or priests, there was no attempt to lay stress upon the spiritual truth which they contain, but the whole aim was to bring the rising generation into absolute submission to the **ordinances of the Church**. It was particularly insisted, that all who desire to be saved must appear at least once a year before the priest, confess to him all their sins, receive from him absolution, or the assurance of pardon, and have such penances imposed upon them as the regulations of the Church might require. These penances were exercises of various kinds, such as particular prayers

repeated a certain number of times, pilgrimages, fasts, etc., and it was taught that only by a conscientious fulfilment of these could the demands of a righteous God be satisfied and His favor enjoyed. Whoever failed in strictest obedience to these requirements would at death be cast into the fires of **purgatory**, there to remain until the measure of his agony should sufficiently atone for his shortcomings.

It was taught that a higher degree of morality and sanctity than possible under the ordinary conditions of life might be attained by the renunciation of marriage, and the surrender of all earthly property and personal independence. Some eagerly embraced the opportunity thus afforded to gain repute for piety, assuming the three-fold vow of **poverty, chastity** (so-called) and **obedience** (to superiors in the Church). Others entered upon the monastic life to escape the necessity of earning for themselves an honest livelihood. But there were always many who sincerely sought, by enduring the privations and discharging the exacting duties imposed upon them by this cruel system, to gain the favor of God and secure true peace of conscience.

It was in a religious atmosphere thoroughly permeated with these **false ideas** that the childhood of Luther was passed. His susceptible nature was readily moulded by them; but he could discover in them nowhere an answer to the deepest yearnings of his heart. The home of his youth could afford neither counsel nor sympathy where both were so sorely needed.

To the **Church** and its ordinances alone could he look for help. His whole training had tended to cultivate a deep respect for its authority. There was, indeed, a growing tendency among the com-

mon people to make merry over the inconsistent lives of the monks and priests, while earnest minds were deeply grieved by the notorious abuses which were tolerated, and even encouraged, by the Church. But in the secluded region in which Luther lived, these abuses had not become so glaring as in many places, and his parents and their associates at Mansfeld remained humble and zealous subjects of the ecclesiastical government under which they had always lived. Whatever suspicions may have been excited in their own minds must have been carefully concealed from their children, whom they sought to rear in unquestioning faith in that Church with which, in their view, was inseparably associated the whole divine plan of salvation. Yet how little encouragement was to be hoped for from this quarter, may be inferred from what has been already said.

Against all the sombre influences of his early years the **strong, hopeful nature** of this boy bravely struggled. We have no evidence that he became morose, or gave any hint of the inward struggles which he silently endured. He dutifully accepted the calling which his father had marked out for him and sought to make the best use of the meagre educational advantages at first afforded him.

## CHAPTER II.

### EARLY STUDENT DAYS.

WHEN fourteen years of age, Luther had acquired all the knowledge to be obtained in the school at Mansfeld. He was then, in 1597, sent to a school in **Magdeburg**, in high repute for its cultivation of the Latin language and literature, and for the probity of its instructors, who belonged to a society of pious priests known as the "Null Brethren." Of his studies here, we have no record.

Suffering on one occasion from a burning fever, the use of water was strictly prohibited. Watching his opportunity, he slipped down stairs and drank a whole pitcherful. The fever was broken and he quickly recovered. This is the first recorded illustration of the Reformer's independence of character, and furnishes a striking picture of the eagerness with which his thirsting spirit afterward quaffed the living water forbidden by the religious doctors of the day.

Magdeburg was a flourishing city of forty thousand inhabitants, and the young student was here for the first time brought into contact with the busy life of the commercial world. This must have exerted a broadening influence upon him, but the only incidents of the period which he has deemed worthy of record clearly indicate what was then already the bent of his mind.

A prince of Anhalt who, having surrendered his patrimony, had for twenty-five years subjected himself to the most rigid ascetic discipline and



was wasted to a mere skeleton, passed through the streets of the city bare-footed, miserably clad and bowed to the earth beneath a heavy burden. Luther was stirred to unbounded admiration, and severely upbraided himself for the worldliness of his own life.

Somewhere, probably upon a panel in one of the numerous churches, he saw a painting of a **great ship** representing the Catholic Church sailing for the celestial port. On board were the Pope and cardinals with a goodly number of bishops. The crew consisted of priests and monks, and the Holy Ghost was the pilot. Struggling in the waters were a host of poor laymen, some just sinking, and others desperately clinging to ropes thrown from the ship and affording the only hope of salvation. As he gazed in horror, his soul yearned to share the security of the holy men on board, among whom, however, not a single layman was to be seen.

In the following year he entered an excellent school in **Eisenach**, where some relatives of his mother resided, with whom he was probably able to live more cheaply than among strangers. They were, however, themselves in moderate circumstances, and he was compelled also to help himself, which he did by singing in company with a circle of his school friends upon the streets of Eisenach and in the surrounding country, receiving in return small contributions of money from benevolent burghers. Upon one occasion of this character, the fervor with which he sang the devout hymns selected attracted the attention of a refined and wealthy lady, Madam **Ursula Cotta**, who invited him to her table and persuaded him to make frequent visits to her home. This kindness was an incalculable blessing to the lonely

boy. It soothed his spirit and at the same time gave him his first acquaintance with the usages of cultivated society.

The institution at Eisenach was in sympathy with that enthusiastic revival of interest in scientific and classical studies which is known as **Humanism**. Among his teachers here were **Pastor Wiegand**, with whom he maintained friendly relations for many years, and **John Trebonius**, a poet and most faithful instructor, who is said to have always removed his cap when coming before his pupils, impressed with the thought that there might be among them some future city magistrate or learned doctor. During the four years spent at this place, his quick perception, vivid imagination and power of apt and picturesque expression became manifest to all. He acquired a full knowledge of **Latin**, writing it freely in both prose and verse.

## CHAPTER III.

### ADVANCED STUDIES.

Not far from Mansfeld was the **University of Erfurt**, then one of the most illustrious of Germany. Among its prominent professors were Iodicus Truttvetter and Arnoldi von Usingen. The institution adhered to the principles of the later **Scholasticism**, which accepted the traditional dogmas of the Church and exhausted its energies in hair-splitting and profitless discussions of the external forms of doctrine. Luther here acquired a thorough acquaintance with this system, which was invaluable to him in his subsequent labors, and his natural powers of discernment were greatly quickened by the keen encounter with his academical opponents.

But it was among the zealous advocates of the **Humanistic** studies, which were also here encouraged, that Luther found his most congenial friends, including **Crotus Rubianus**, **George Spalatin** and **John Lange**. He was a welcome comrade in the circle to which they belonged, being regarded by them as the philosopher and musician of the company.

The wide-spread interest in **classical literature** and the **liberal sciences** which had spread through the more intelligent classes of all the great western nations opened an inviting field to the ambitious youth of the universities. The ancient mythology of Greece and Rome kindled their imagination, the poets and orators of antiquity became the models of style, and the moral and relig-

ious principles of the ancient cultured heathen world were unconsciously imbibed. The movement thus tended to divert the minds of its adherents entirely away from the Christian religion. When the scriptural ideas of sin, atonement, fellowship with God, and a future life were ignored, but little respect could be longer entertained for the Bible. It was placed upon a par with the sacred books of other religions. God Himself and the prophets and saints of the Church were by many classed with the gods and heroes of heathen nations. The very foundations of morality were thus undermined. The voice of conscience was smothered and all serious views of life banished. The pleasures of intellectual culture were extolled by some; social enjoyment became the sole aim of others; while not a few, freed from all moral and religious restraint, indulged in gross immorality under the garb of superior enlightenment.

Yet this new godless culture found it quite possible to thrive under the outward forms of religious observances then prevalent in the Church. Its adherents formed a sort of intellectual aristocracy among the higher civil and ecclesiastical orders, whilst the ordinances of the Church were considered a valuable means of preserving good order among the masses, their observance by the enlightened classes being only for the sake of example. Thus there had sprung up, especially in Italy and notably in Rome, before the Reformation a new heathenism under the forms of Christian life, which in utter hypocrisy exceeded anything ever known in the heathen world, and which afterward boasted a foremost representative in that so-called Head of the Church, Pope Leo X., by whom Luther was condemned as a heretic.

In Germany, however, these destructive ten-

dencies had not yet been developed. The young Humanists and "poets" (as they styled themselves) of Erfurt were moral and studious, and, while glorifying the ancient classical authors, maintained the most friendly relations with their scholastic professors, seeking only to give a more refined and poetic expression to the truths taught by the Church. Thus Luther felt the quickening impulse of the movement in its purest form.

With characteristic ardor, the young student now entered upon the general **philosophical course**, which included grammar, rhetoric, logic, the physical sciences and moral philosophy. Among classical writers, he preferred Ovid, Virgil and Cicero. In studying these and other ancient authors, it was not his aim to imitate their elegance of diction, but to glean from them practical lessons of every-day wisdom. His **own style**, though classic in purity, was forceful rather than elegant. His friends regretted greatly that he did not allow the spirit of classical culture to more largely modify the bluntness of his speech and the passionate energy of his nature. But it was just these qualities which kept him in full sympathy with the common people and which enabled him to deal such terrific blows against error and breast the storms which terrified his more fastidious associates. Although the first book printed in Germany in Greek characters left the press of Erfurt in the very year of Luther's admission to the University, the study of that language was pursued by very few at that time, and it was only in later years that he became proficient in it.

In the general branches of the course his **progress** was so rapid that in his third session he reached the first academic degree, that of Bachelor. This was followed, in 1503, by that of Master,

which was equivalent to our "Doctor of Philosophy." Melanchthon testifies that his extraordinary ability won the admiration of the whole University.

The culture of his talent for music furnished relief from severer labors. Besides the further training of his voice, he learned to play upon the lute.

In accordance with his father's desire, he now determined to apply himself to the study of the Law, which had in Henning Goede a most distinguished representative in the faculty at Erfurt; but he had scarcely entered upon the new course of study when he was led to a remarkable step which changed the entire current of his life.

Throughout his whole career as a student, **conscience** had given him no rest. He began every day with private prayer and attendance upon early mass, it being even then a favorite maxim with him: "To have prayed well is to have studied well." Yet a fellow-student testifies that he often said with deep earnestness as they washed their hands: "The more we wash ourselves, the more unclean do we become." He one day discovered in the library of the University the first entire copy of the Bible which he had ever seen, and pored over its pages with eager delight. But he still found no peace of mind. He thought of God only as a stern and righteous Judge.

A number of incidents increased his anxiety. During a severe sickness he thought himself dying and was greatly alarmed. One Easter, as he was on his way to visit his parents, he accidentally severed an artery of his leg with his student sword. Lying upon his back and pressing the wound, he cried out in agony, "Mary, help!"

Soon after receiving his Master's degree, he was profoundly moved by the sudden death of an intimate friend. Returning from a visit to Mansfeld, on July 2d, 1505, he was caught in a terrific thunder-storm, and, as a vivid flash of lightning darted before him, he fell to the earth and exclaimed: "Help me, dear St. Anna; I will become a monk." Fifteen days afterward he bade farewell to the world, and entered the Augustinian monastery of the town.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MONASTERY LIFE.

THE talented university student was cordially welcomed to the cloister. For the first year, as a "novice," he was compelled to perform the most **menial services**, such as scrubbing the floors of the convent, and traversing the streets of the town in company with an older brother of the order gathering gifts of bread and cheese for the inmates of the monastery. The envy of his associates, or the supposed necessity of special stringency in his case to overcome the temptation to spiritual pride, led to the imposing of such duties upon him even after he had been consecrated to the priesthood. He performed all these tasks without murmuring, and was zealous in meeting all the religious requirements of his position. Seven or eight hours daily were set apart for the repeating of **prescribed prayers**, the Lord's Prayer and the Ave Maria being regularly recited twenty-five times every day.

When the year of probation was ended, the novice was solemnly **received into the order** of Augustinian monks, taking the vow of unquestioning obedience to Almighty God, the Virgin Mary and the Prior of the convent. He was now given a cell by himself, containing a table, a bed-stead and a chair. He could afterward declare: "If ever a monk could have entered heaven through monastic tortures, I should have done so," and fearlessly appeal to his former associates to attest his scrupulous fidelity in obeying all the minutest rules of the order.



At least once a week, every brother was compelled to make **confession** privately to a designated priest. Luther acknowledged so many transgressions to his "confessor," that the well-meaning old man grew tired of hearing him. He was guilty of no gross outward sins, but accused himself of quickness of temper, envy, impatience, and a host of insignificant offenses against the rules of the convent concerning the daily exercises of worship, etc.

It was the doctrine of the Church, that the penitent must confess all his sins, with inward penitence, or contrition. The confessor then pronounced absolution, or the pardon of sin, but at once also imposed as temporal penalties yet to be required various mortifications of the flesh, commonly called **penances**. The imperfect performance of these penances would incur the wrath of God, and, if not leading to final perdition, would at least require the soul to endure unspeakable torment in purgatorial fires. Luther accepted this teaching with unquestioning faith, and sought in the prescribed way to make sure of his acceptance with God. But he was too honest to believe that his penitence was as deep as it should be, and although it was taught that the absolution pronounced would atone for any imperfection in the contrition of the sincere penitent, yet he was deprived of the comfort which he might have found in this assurance by the immediate imposition of further penances, in the fulfilment of which he again realized his own infirmity. In the desperate effort to find inward peace, he undertook far more than was required of him. He thus gained much **repute for sanctity**; but in all these efforts he afterwards recognized the pride of his own heart, which sought in this way to attain a righteousness of its own and to merit the divine favor.

In May, 1507, Luther was formally inducted into the **priesthood**, when the sense of added responsibility greatly burdened him. Who was he, that he should dare to approach God and present to Him, in the sacrifice of the mass, the body of His dear Son? He trembled, and almost perished at the thought. The accidental omission of a word of the prescribed formula he regarded as a grievous sin. He selected twenty-one out of the long catalogue of saints, and at each daily mass implored the intercession of three of these, thus completing the list every week.

Meanwhile, he studied diligently the **scholastic theology**, and soon knew the works of Biel and D'Ailly almost by heart. He found great delight in the keen dialectics of Occam. He read faithfully, but with some impatience, the voluminous works of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. But all these celebrated teachers of theology failed to bring peace to his troubled heart. They all taught him to rely on his own efforts to procure for himself the favor of God. Preaching not the love of God, but His majesty and absolute power, they led the anxious student to imagine that the tortures of mind which he had so long endured were indications that he was hopelessly given over to eternal destruction by an unchanging decree of the Almighty.

His despondency was doubtless increased by the impaired condition of his **bodily health**. Long fasting and arduous labors, combined with an almost unexampled devotion to study, reduced his vitality and naturally inclined him to gloomy forebodings. Thus many circumstances combined to make him for all time an example of the **utter helplessness** of the man who thinks by his own noblest and most self-denying efforts to secure the approval of a holy God.

But the mercy of the Lord whom he thus ignorantly sought to worship was preparing deliverance. While yet a novice, he was permitted for a season to have the use of a Bible, and, though he failed to grasp the central thought of the Gospel message, he stored up many passages in his faithful memory. A brother in the monastery, to whom he confided something of his spiritual trouble, urged him to make his own the declaration of the Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," reminding him that it is not the sins of Peter or of Paul of which we are to think when making this confession, but our own, and insisting also that "God commands us to hope," and that despair is therefore disobedience.

But it was from the vicar-general of his order, **John von Staupitz**, a man of earnest practical piety and of sympathetic nature, that he received the most substantial aid. The latter, on his regular visits to Erfurt, encouraged the confidence of the young monk and became deeply interested in him. He advised him, instead of worrying about predestination, to view the mercy of God in the wounds of Christ; instead of his own scrupulous observance of outward ceremonies, to seek that inward renewal of heart which is, according to the New Testament, the essence of conversion; and to trust, not in the pretentious works of his own proud self-righteousness, but in the grace of God as revealed in Christ. This was timely advice, and to his old age Luther acknowledged it as the chief means by which God led him to a knowledge of the saving truth. In the light of his experience we can understand why he so frequently speaks of the value of wise Christian counsel in hours of spiritual distress and of the benefits of confession and absolution.

With a new hope stirring within him, Luther now turned with fresh interest to the Scriptures. He discovered that the scriptural word for repentance in the original Greek had no reference to outward observances, but could mean only a change of mind, or heart. Everywhere he found clearest revelations of the grace of God, and his whole conception of the plan of salvation was changed. Looking away from himself with a faith genuine yet timid, he found a measure of inward comfort utterly unknown before. This was the **crisis period** of his new spiritual life. He now advanced steadily in his perception of scriptural truth, although he had not the remotest idea of the revolutionary character of his new principles.

The intellectual attainments of the Erfurt monk had meanwhile become widely known, and he was regarded as the most talented and learned man in the Augustinian order of Germany. His zeal for the proper understanding of the Scriptures led to the purchase of a **Hebrew lexicon**, then a great rarity, and his diligent application to the study of that language without an instructor or associate.

## CHAPTER V.

### PROFESSORSHIP AT WITTENBERG.

At the close of the year 1508, Luther was, upon the recommendation of Staupitz, appointed a **Professor** in the newly-established University of Wittenberg. He at first taught only the so-called philosophical branches, which he had pursued at Erfurt. His preference was, however, for theology, which, as he was accustomed to say, deals with the kernel of truth, whereas the other sciences are concerned only with the shell. In connection with his official duties, he at once entered upon the course of study necessary in order to secure the academic rank required for the higher position. The degree of **Bachelor of Theology** could be obtained only through three stages, each occupying at least six months, and each closing with an examination and a public discussion. These requirements were easily met, and the baccalaureate degree obtained within eighteen months. Within this period he gave theological instruction for three sessions at the University of Erfurt, when he was recalled to Wittenberg, where he now outranked all the other instructors in the faculty.

In January, 1511, he, in company with another delegate, was sent to Rome upon an important mission connected with the government of the Augustinian monasteries of Germany. He rejoiced in this opportunity of visiting the fountain-head of Christian authority and life, and hoped for great spiritual benefit from contact with the

holy leaders of the Church. At the first sight of the capital he prostrated himself upon the ground, crying, "Hail, holy Rome!" The four weeks spent in the city were diligently utilized. He ran about, he afterwards tells us, like "a stupid saint," from church to church, believing all the silly fables told him, and striving to gain the special blessings offered to the worshipers at each sacred shrine. He almost wished that his mother and father were dead, that he might embrace the opportunity to pray them out of purgatory. As he was reverently climbing upon his knees up the **stair-case** said to have been brought from Pilate's judgment-hall at Jerusalem, an exercise which appeared to him the very acme of holy service, instead of the sense of the divine favor which he had anticipated, he was overwhelmed with a conviction of the utter inconsistency of all such works of supposed merit with the great declaration of the Apostle: "The just shall live by faith."

His fond belief in the **sanctity of Rome** was now rudely dispelled. He was amazed at the reckless luxury of the papal court, and greatly scandalized by the trifling way in which the priests conducted sacred services, even jesting as they celebrated the solemn mass. He discovered that Pope Julian was a shrewd, worldly-minded man, and that cardinals were guilty of gross, open immorality. He heard it said upon the streets that "if there is a hell, Rome is built over it." His patriotic spirit was stirred when he heard the German people sneeringly spoken of as "stupid" for their simple and reverent obedience. Yet all this did not shake his confidence in the divine authority of the Church, but only led him to grieve over the unworthiness of those occupying its chief places of honor, and to long more earnestly for **reform.**

Returning to Wittenberg, he was appointed **Sub-prior** of the monastery at that place, and on October 18th and 19th, 1512, was solemnly invested with the title, **Doctor of Theology**. He accepted this very unwillingly, but, as it involved both the authority and a solemn oath to defend the truth of the Gospel, it afterward gave him great confidence when compelled to maintain his convictions against the traditional teachings of the Church.

In the **theological lectures** which he now began to deliver, an entirely new method was introduced. The exposition of the Scriptures had been previously committed to instructors of lower rank, whilst the doctors of divinity were expected to base their instructions upon the developed system of the great scholastic authorities. Luther, on the contrary, confined his lectures to the Scriptures themselves, and aimed especially to present in the clearest possible form the great saving truths of revelation. In the very first course of instruction, full notes of which have happily been preserved to us, he declares the Word of God to be for the seeker after truth what pasture is to the ox, its nest to the bird, or a stream to the fish.

He chose for his first course of lectures as "**Doctor of the Sacred Scriptures**," in 1513 and 1514, the **Psalms**, being attracted by their devotional spirit. He had a special edition of the Psalter printed for the use of his students, in which large spaces were left between the lines and upon the margin. A copy of this edition is still preserved in the library at Wolfenbüttel, the pages of which are crowded with comments in the handwriting of the Reformer, evidently forming the basis for the fuller expositions given to his classes. The comments do not manifest that anxiety to

discover the original meaning of the text which afterwards characterized Luther's expository writings, but they display the deepest sympathy with the inward struggles of the sacred writers and a constant effort to detect, wherever possible, prophecies and types of that Saviour in whose fellowship his own soul had now found rest.

In 1515, he began to lecture upon the **Epistle to the Romans**, having found the key to a proper understanding of this profound theological treatise in the 17th verse of the first chapter. He had formerly conceived of the righteousness of God as a revelation only of stern, uncompromising justice. He now, in the light of Paul's argument, beheld in it the righteousness imputed to every one who believes in Christ, as the sure pledge of his acceptance as a child of God.

In 1516, he undertook an exposition of the **Epistle to the Galatians**, developing especially the scriptural discrimination between the Law and the Gospel—between the bondage of the letter and the freedom of the spirit. As the original epistle swept away the pretensions of the Pharisees of old, so Luther's strong presentation of its principles now placed in clear light the perversions of the entire papal system of human ordinances, and taught men to render even to the divine law not a servile, but a willing and loving obedience.

These three early commentaries all discuss the **great question** which in practical importance overshadows all others: How shall man become righteous before God and inherit eternal life? They clearly state the scriptural doctrine of justification by faith. They teach that Christian character depends, not upon outward works of self-mortification, but upon the state of the heart; that sins are forgiven freely by the grace of God; and that



the faith which accepts pardon as a free gift becomes an active promoter of all good works, just as a good tree will produce good fruit.

From the celebrated teachers of theology of the Middle Ages, who had blindly adopted the ideas and method of the ancient heathen philosopher, Aristotle, and who failed, in consequence, to understand the nature of sin and the real purpose of the Gospel, Luther turned to **Augustine**, whose name was still honored, but whose works had fallen into neglect. He was delighted to find in this great teacher a clear confession of the depth of human depravity and helplessness, and a magnifying of the free mercy of God. But even Augustine had not so fully grasped as did Luther the apostolic conception of faith alone as the means of appropriating the freely-offered grace.

But the mind and heart of the great Reformer were subjected also to a powerful influence from another quarter. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there had arisen in Germany a number of men of deep contemplative piety, known as the **German Mystics**. They sought to attain fellowship with God by renunciation of the world and of their own desires. They too often carried out this idea to great extremes, endeavoring to lose all sense of existence in a dreamy reverie, to dissolve away "into nothingness." Already in the cloister Luther had felt the impulse of this system from his study of the works of **Gerson** († A. D. 1429), and from his intercourse with Staupitz. The sermons of one of the noblest of its representatives, **John Tauler** († A. D. 1361), now fell into his hands and he read it with avidity. In strong contrast with the cold formulas of the scholastics and the empty external works of the papal system, the deep religious spirit of these

men enchanted him. He was so much pleased with a little anonymous tract in which their views were advocated that he himself, in 1516, published a portion of it, and, two years later, the entire work, under the title of "**German Theology.**" Whilst he avoided the empty philosophical conclusions in which the system of the Mystics finally evaporated, his sympathetic study of its better literature was of great benefit in adding depth and fervor to his piety. Its influence may be traced in all his future writings in his profound yearning for fellowship with God and in the recognition of self-will as the very essence of sin. He rose above it, however, when he taught that God is love, and that we are not only to prostrate ourselves before Him, but to allow Him to lift us up and inspire us with a new and joyous life. Whilst the piety of the Mystics led them to withdraw from the world, that of Luther sent him forth to valiant service in the cause of truth.

With his learned labors was combined a glowing zeal in the practical **application of the Gospel** to the common people. At Erfurt, he had preached in the dining hall of the convent; during his first years at Wittenberg, in a little building of logs and clay, and afterwards in the University Church. It was his custom at times to preach every day for a week or more, sometimes delivering two daily sermons in addition to his regular lectures at the University. His sermons were **plain and practical**, addressed not to the learned professors in the front pews, but to the peasants and servants who occupied the humbler seats. He spoke with great **fervor** and with convincing **power**.

In a series of discourses upon the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, concluded in the early part of A. D. 1517, the **sins of every-**

day life were vividly portrayed, with the manifest purpose of awakening in the hearers a deep sense of personal sinfulness with distrust in any possible effort of their own, and then leading them to the exercise of simple, joyous faith in Christ. The **glaring abuses** of the prevalent saint-worship and the much-lauded pilgrimages are freely denounced, and the sanctity of the ordinary daily life of the humble believer is exalted in contrast with the supposed superior holiness of the monastic and clerical orders. Thus, long before Luther dreamed that he should be called to occupy a position of world-wide influence as a reformer, he was known in the community in which he lived as a man **utterly fearless** in his denunciation of popular errors. In this, many brave men had, indeed, preceded him, but he differed from them all in his fervent presentation of **direct, personal faith** in an atoning and triumphant Saviour as the all-sufficient basis of a genuine religious life.

The regular monastic duties were still faithfully discharged, although he no longer sought thus to merit the favor of God. He was in 1515 elected **District Vicar** for Thuringia and Misnia (Meissen), having eleven Augustinian monasteries under his care. He displayed a deep personal interest in the spiritual welfare of the inmates of these institutions, as well as practical wisdom in government and discipline.

He was still a **faithful subject** of the Roman Catholic Church, bowing before her authority and acknowledging the validity of all her ordinances. He wore his monk's cowl, and urged his associates and subordinates as strongly as ever to faithful obedience. He still thought it proper to implore the saints to intercede for men with God, and he himself in his sermons openly invoked

the aid of the Virgin Mary. Huss and the Bohemian Brethren, who had renounced the papal authority, he regarded as "wretched heretics." If he inveighed against the corruptions of the monks and clergy, and warned against the preaching of idle legends instead of the simple truth of the Gospel, he thought himself in this fully sustained by the better sentiment of the Church at large. If he quoted Augustine against Aquinas and Scotus, he did not imagine that he was thereby assailing the accepted dogmas of the Church, or questioning its authority.

But the **Reformation was now essentially completed** in the soul of Luther. He had for years been leading a life of joyous faith in Christ. He had found himself in full spiritual accord with Paul and David. With unwearying delight he had been unfolding to all about him the consolations of the glorious Gospel. Within the still narrow circle of his influence, the truth had been gladly welcomed by many. The time had come when, in the providence of God, the light thus enkindled was to break through the heavy shrouds of mediæval darkness and shine forth to the ends of the earth.

## PERIOD II.

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### ASSERTION OF PRINCIPLES. A. D. 1517-1521.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE CALL TO ACTION.

It was the public **Sale of Indulgences**, or certificates of pardon for sin, by official representatives of the Pope, that summoned the studious professor and earnest pastor to the field of controversy. That an abuse so flagrant should find intelligent defenders even in that age, or that opposition to it should lead to a transformation of the whole civil and religious aspect of the modern world, seems almost incredible. Yet it was just here that the battle for Gospel liberty was joined. The shameless abuse of the traditional indulgences led to an examination of the theory upon which they were based, and this involved a direct scrutiny and rejection of the claims upon which rested the whole system of mediæval theology, and the entire fabric of the papal authority.

The accepted theology of the day taught that **repentance is a sacrament**, or churchly ordinance, consisting of three parts: contrition of heart, confession by the lips (to a priest), and satisfaction by works. Upon the first part but little stress was commonly laid. It was understood to be merely a dread of punishment, and if sufficiently deep to lead to confession, the officiating priest

was authorized to pronounce absolution, by which act, it was taught, any deficiency in the sincerity or depth of the contrition was fully supplied, and the professed penitent positively released from the penalty of eternal death. In place of the latter, however, were now appointed various temporal penalties, such as fastings, prescribed religious exercises, the giving of alms, etc. The meeting of these demands constituted the third necessary part of repentance. If the works of satisfaction thus required be not fully rendered in the present life, the neglect must be atoned for by an indefinite period of suffering in the fires of purgatory.

There was thus, after all, upon this theory, no such thing as the free and full forgiveness of sin by the grace of God. The confessing penitent was, indeed, declared free from the penalty of eternal death; but for every slightest defect in the atoning work still required of him he must face the prospect of purgatorial fires. Unless his obedience was perfect, he was therefore still, and must be for an indefinite period after death, a **subject of punishment**, enduring the wrath of God. As the penalties imposed by the Church grew heavier, the years of prospective purgatorial pains grew longer. Since the obedience of the masses to the mandates of the Church depended largely upon their desire to avoid the aggravation of the agonies of purgatory, it was but natural that zealous partisans of the hierarchy should paint those agonies in the deepest hues, until they became, to the imagination of the common people, practically equivalent to the unending pains of hell.

But the Pope, it was further taught, might remit ecclesiastical penalties in view of distinguished service rendered to the Church, or generous gifts to her coffers. The merits of Christ and the good

works of those eminent saints who had done more than was required of them were supposed to constitute a sacred "treasure of the Church," which the Pope was authorized to apply in making up deficiencies in the holiness or obedience of others. He might even thus lighten or altogether remove the penalties yet resting upon souls already in purgatory, in view of the devotion or gifts of their surviving relatives.

Gradually, this theory of papal pardon, or indulgence, was modified in two important particulars. It was made applicable, not only to the imperfect observance of churchly penalties, but to transgressions of the divine law as well. Thus contrition, or sorrow for sin, became a secondary matter, and repentance a mere outward ceremony—a penance rendered by the sinner himself, and even this avoidable upon the payment of money for the benefit of the Church.

Thus, hundreds of thousands of indulgences, assuring the full pardon of all sins, were granted to those who participated in the Crusades. At a later day, they were freely bestowed in return for generous contributions of funds to aid in war against the Turks. The guardians of sacred shrines and of the reputed relics of the saints in various places were authorized to dispense to all visitors there making confession on certain days, or to deceased friends of the latter, indulgences covering varying terms of years in purgatory.

Pope Leo was at this time zealously prosecuting the erection of **St. Peter's Cathedral**, at Rome, and graciously offered to all who should pay to his accredited agents appropriate sums of money certificates entitling them to claim at the hands of any priest (penitence being prudently mentioned in the papers, but as prudently overlooked in the

preaching of the auctioneering agents) absolution for all their sins and participation in all the blessings of salvation. Prince Albert, Archbishop of Mayence, had undertaken for one-half the proceeds (this private bargain being unsuspected by Luther) the distribution of these indulgences through a large part of Germany, and had engaged a bold and unscrupulous priest, **John Tetzel**, to urge the people to avail themselves of the opportunity thus offered. The latter, prosecuting his work with fiery zeal, reached Jüterbog, a few miles from Wittenberg, in the fall of the year 1517, and was there literally selling "grace for cash." He wrought especially upon the tender regard of his hearers for their deceased friends, crying: "The moment the groschen rings in the chest, the soul flies out of purgatory."

Members of **Luther's** parish purchased these papers, and then, boldly confessing sins which they had no idea of forsaking, demanded absolution at his hands. Horrified at the impiety, he utterly refused to absolve them and earnestly admonished them to repentance. This they promptly reported to Tetzel, who declaimed fiercely against the presumptuous monk daring thus to treat with contempt the printed mandate of the Pope. But the monk maintained his ground, and from the pulpit denounced the shameless traffic. He thus discharged his duty as a pastor; but he felt a larger responsibility resting upon him as a Doctor of Theology, sworn to proclaim and to defend the Gospel before all the world.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE BOLD CHALLENGE.

THE most prominent building in Wittenberg was the **Castle Church**. Originally established as a depository for a "sacred thorn," said to have been taken from the crown pressed upon the Saviour's brow, it had for more than one hundred and fifty years been a centre of superstitious devotion, when, in the closing decade of the fifteenth century, the Elector Frederick the Wise greatly enlarged it and at enormous expense gathered within its walls relics from all parts of the world to the number of more than five thousand, including a piece of the burning bush seen by Moses, part of the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, arms and fingers of the babes of Bethlehem slaughtered by Herod, hair of the Virgin Mary, fragments of the Saviour's swaddling clothes, his beard, the purple robe, toes and hair of various saints, etc. Whoever worshiped reverently in this sacred edifice on the days immediately preceding or following the festival of All Saints, was entitled to papal indulgence extending in some cases for one hundred years. This church stood in close relation with the University, the public exercises of the latter being held within its walls, and academic announcements being upon the great festival days posted upon its doors.

Here was now the opportunity for the brave young Doctor. **Appointed to preach** in this church on the 31st of October, 1517, the afternoon preceding All Saints' day, he discourses fervently upon true inward repentance as distinguished

from outward forms of penance, and fearlessly condemns the traffic in indulgences, although well knowing that he is thereby robbing the treasured relics of the place of all their value and exposing to ridicule the folly of his patron, the Elector.

Some time before entering the church he had quietly performed the act which is now universally recognized as the actual starting-point of the Reformation. Stepping up to the great door, he nailed upon it a proclamation inviting all persons interested to participate in person or by writing in a public discussion of the "Virtue of Indulgences." As a basis for the disputation, he presented **Ninety-five Theses**, or brief propositions, bearing upon the subject. He did not himself realize that the principles which he announced must eventually abolish the practice altogether and undermine the whole system of church organization by which they were supported. It was not his calling to forecast the results of his conduct, but simply to be faithful to the light which he had and to his position as a teacher and defender of scriptural truth.

The Theses are **moderate** and **respectful** in tone. The author freely grants the right of the Pope to issue indulgences, and denounces only the flagrant abuse of them. Upon some points he is not clear in his own mind, and hence states them in interrogative form, hoping by thorough discussion to arrive at right conclusions. Starting with the Saviour's call to repentance, he maintains that the latter is to be an experience continuing all through life—an inward sorrow for sin, manifesting itself outwardly in the overcoming of the sinful impulses of the flesh; that the indulgences issued by the Pope have nothing to do with this, but can remit only the outward penalties imposed by the

Church; that they cannot in any way affect the souls of the departed; that every true Christian enjoys the pardon of all his sins without any indulgence from the Pope; that it is far better to expend one's money in works of Christian love than to squander it in the purchase of indulgences; that the true "treasure of the Church" is not any extra merits of the saints, but is the Gospel; that, if the Pope can release so many souls from purgatory for money, pure Christian love should impel him to set them all free; and that it is not by seeking to avoid suffering and trial, but by bearing them with patience, that we can hope to enter heaven at last.

The reception accorded the Theses far exceeded the expectations of their author. Within two weeks they had been scattered throughout all Germany and in an incredibly short time had penetrated to the most distant portions of the Church.

The friends of the brave monk were thoroughly frightened, and thought he had gone too far. Said the jurist, Jerome Scheurf: "What do you expect to accomplish? The authorities of the Church will not endure such boldness." The prior and sub-prior of his cloister begged him to desist and not thus bring disgrace upon their entire order. The theologian, Albert Krantz, upon hearing the Theses read, exclaimed: "Thou speakest the truth, good brother, but thou wilt accomplish nought by it. Go to thy cell, and cry: 'God have mercy upon me.'" On the other hand, no one ventured to accept the challenge to a public disputation at Wittenberg. The Theses, with their author, stood for a time alone before the world. Nothing terrified, although sincerely regretting the wide and, as he thought, premature, publicity

given to the matter, Luther at once issued a *Discourse upon Indulgences and Grace*, embodying the same ideas, and set himself to the preparation of a careful elucidation and defence of the positions which he had taken.

## CHAPTER III.

### ANGRY RESPONSES.

Although the partisans of the Pope at first regarded the Theses with blank amazement, and sought to discredit them as the idle vaporings of a contentious monk, it soon became evident that more serious attention must be given to them.

**Tetzel**, after seeking to add dignity to his position and authority to his utterances by securing from the University at Frankfort the degrees of Licentiate and Doctor of Theology, issued two series of counter-theses in which he boldly declared that the repentance spoken of by Christ was by Him meant to include confession to the priest and the observance of all the penances imposed by the Church, and that the Pope is infallible in his utterances and supreme in his power. Three hundred **Dominican friars**, assembled at Frankfort, espoused the cause of Tetzel; but the Wittenberg students, seizing the entire stock of his theses brought to that place, burned them in the public square.

Early in January, 1518, there was issued from Rome an official document far more formidable in character. Its author was **Sylvester Prierias**, Master of the Sacred Palace, to whom had been given a censorship over all publications upon the territory of the Romish Church. It advocated the most extreme views concerning the subjection of the Church to the Papacy and the absolute necessity of priestly ordinances to salvation, whilst denouncing Luther as a leper and a vicious dog. It

scornfully declared that if the Pope had only given this monk a fat bishopric and allowed him to sell indulgences, he would now be a most subservient vassal of the papal throne. When tempted to criticise severely the harsh language sometimes employed by Luther in controversy, it will be well for us to remember that it was the papal party whose official representatives first descended to personalities and the hurling of opprobrious names.

The **Pope himself**, in the following month, instructed the Vicar-General of the Augustinian Order to take prompt measures for the suppression of the contumacious monk of Wittenberg. This was not known by Luther, however, until some months afterward.

Perhaps the most unexpected attack was that of **John Eck**, a distinguished theologian of Ingolstadt, with whom Luther had a pleasant acquaintance, and for whose attainments he entertained sincere respect. This supposed friend prepared in March, 1518, under the title, *Obelisci* (from the custom of marking condemned passages in books with the obelisk, †), a criticism of the Theses, denouncing them as full of the poison of Bohemian heresy, regardless of the restraints of Christian love, and destructive of all churchly order.

During the following July, **Tetzel**, emboldened by the contemptuous silence with which his former assault had been received, returned to the charge, decrying Luther as an arch-heretic, ignorant of the Scriptures and of the writings of the Church Fathers. **Hoogstraten**, meanwhile, who had already gained repute as a persecutor of the renowned Hebrew scholar, Reuchlin, called upon the Pope to institute a bloody inquisition, and cleanse the Church from the new leaven of heresy.

To all these rude attacks Luther made reply,

adapting his tone, in each case, to the temper and capacity of his opponent. Tetzl and Hoogstraten received very summary treatment. Against Eck he published a formal, scholarly treatise entitled *Asterisci* (the marginal asterisk, \*, indicating approval), whilst in response to the official assault of Prierias, he dashed off within two days a lengthy and indignant rejoinder, fortifying his positions by abundant quotations from the Scriptures and from the acknowledged authorities of the Church.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PATIENT LABOR.

**THE** months which followed the publication of the Theses were for Luther months of unremitting toil. To the duties of his position in the University and the labor devolving upon him as pastor was now added the grave responsibility of leadership in the movement for reform which centred in him as its intrepid leader. He had not dreamed of being brought into such prominence, but he was not the man to shrink from any path of duty opening plainly before him. His greatest concern now was to discover the exact truth upon all the points in controversy, and, to this end, he applied himself with all the ardor of his nature to the work of investigation.

As the Theses had not been designed as a final statement upon the subjects discussed, he began at once the preparation of an extensive exposition of them, emphasizing what was fundamental, and candidly confessing his uncertainty upon some less essential points. He regarded this work as most important, and it was not until the following spring that it was completed and given to the press under the title, "**Elucidations of the Theses concerning the Virtue of Indulgences.**" On May 22d, he sent a partial copy to his superior, the Archbishop of Brandenburg, and on the 30th of the same month addressed another copy to the Pope, to whom the entire work was dedicated. In an accompanying letter, he submits his case with the most earnest protestations of his loyalty



to the Church and his willingness to receive correction, or even condemnation, at the hands of the Pope. He expresses, however, unshaken confidence in his cause, and anticipates a favorable judgment when his principles shall have received candid examination.

A discourse upon "**repentance**," published in February or March, afforded him opportunity to present in a positive form his favorite doctrine of the supreme importance of faith, which the special purpose of the Theses had not enabled him there to discuss at large. He here clearly shows that without faith neither contrition nor confession nor any sacramental act can have saving efficacy.

A very suggestive and comforting exposition of the **110th Psalm** appeared within the same period.

With great simplicity and fervor he continued to unfold the central truths of the Gospel in his frequent **sermons** and in his academical **lectures**. His wide repute for scholarship and the courageous act which had so suddenly made him famous attracted students to Wittenberg in constantly increasing numbers, and these nearly all became earnest advocates of his evangelical views. When anxious friends suggested that his course must ultimately bring upon him public condemnation, he replied: "I neither began for the sake of glory or shame, nor will I desist for either."

A pleasing variation of the routine of his official duties occurred in April and May, when he was summoned to a convention of the Augustinian Order at **Heidelberg**. Reminded that his enemies might embrace the opportunity to inflict personal violence upon him, he declared: "The more they rage, the more will I press forward." Ten days were required for the journey, which was made

mostly on foot. During the visit he was treated with much kindness by his brethren, but no reference was directly made to the great controversy with which his name had become so closely connected. When the business of the convention was completed, he was invited, according to the custom of the day, to conduct a disputation, the serious work of his calling thus following him upon what by less devoted men might have been regarded as a well-earned vacation. He prepared, accordingly, a **series of theses** upon the futility of the works of the law and the true doctrine of the cross. The theologians of Heidelberg combated his views with great acuteness, yet in a friendly spirit; but the result was seen in the conversion of a number of young theologians present to the views of Luther, some of whom afterwards became very prominent in promoting the Reformation. After an absence of about five weeks, he returned, greatly refreshed in body and mind, and applied himself with renewed vigor to his studies.

Meanwhile, neither attacks from without nor his absorbing interest in his own department could make him forgetful of the general **welfare of the institution** in which he labored. With a broad comprehension of the requirements of the age, he earnestly advocated progressive measures in the scientific and philological departments of the University, fully convinced that the most liberal education could but promote the interests of true religion.

## CHAPTER V.

### A BROWBEATING CARDINAL.

MEANWHILE, in Rome, formal proceedings were instituted against Luther for heresy. On August 11th, he received an official citation to appear in the holy city within sixty days and make answer to the charges against him before a special commission, consisting of the Papal Auditor and the Master of the Sacred Palace, the above-mentioned Prierias. As the former of these was merely a fiscal officer, with no aptitude nor experience in matters of doctrine, it was evident that the decision of the case must rest with Prierias, who had already in such a public and offensive way pronounced judgment against the accused.

Luther, always ready to submit his principles to the calm judgment of friend or foe, was yet unwilling to make himself the victim of a mock-trial at the hand of his sworn enemy, and hence very promptly resolved that he **would not obey** the summons. He requested that a trial be granted him upon German soil and before unprejudiced judges, and sought the good offices of his sovereign, the Elector Frederick, in securing this reasonable concession. The latter was providentially just at this time in position to wield a peculiarly powerful influence upon both the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. There was even then assembled at Augsburg an Imperial Diet, to which Pope Leo was appealing for funds to carry on a prolonged war with the Turks, and from which the Emperor Maximilian was endeavoring to secure the election

of his grandson, Charles of Spain, as his own successor. Both had, therefore, every reason to conciliate the Elector Frederick, of Saxony, who was the acknowledged chief of the electoral princes and was himself mentioned as a probable candidate for the coveted imperial throne.

Thus the scheme to entrap Luther at Rome failed, and it was agreed that he should be tried at Augsburg, by the papal representative then present at the Diet, **Cardinal Cajetan**. This official was a man of recognized ability, the acknowledged leader of the Thomist party among the scholastic theologians of the day. For his high office Luther entertained sincere respect, and it was with no little trepidation that the latter now for the first time prepared to appear in person before a direct representative of the Pope, whom he still regarded as the rightful head of the Church.

Disregarding the warnings of suspicious friends, he set out on foot, and on October 7th arrived at Augsburg weary and sick. He at once notified the Cardinal of his presence by a messenger, refusing however to appear in person until furnished with the imperial safe-conduct to which he was entitled. The Emperor being absent from the city upon a hunt, four days elapsed before the irritated and impatient Cardinal could secure the opportunity of dealing with the troublesome monk.

In the meantime, a trusted friend of his, **Urban of Serralonga**, called repeatedly upon Luther and endeavored to induce him to take a less serious view of the situation. The whole matter could be settled, he declared, by one little word of six letters, "revoco" (I recant). When Luther pleaded for the common people, who were being so shamefully deluded, the trifling ecclesiastic laughingly maintained that it is allowable to deceive the

people, if by that means money can be made to flow into the coffers of the Church. Finally, he reminded Luther that he could not expect the Elector to go to war for his defence, and tauntingly inquired where he would find a refuge when the strong arm of the Empire should be invoked against him. To this Luther calmly replied: "Under the open sky."

At length, on October 12th, the accused and his judge stood **face to face**. Luther, wearing a robe which he had borrowed for the occasion, prostrated himself before the great spiritual prince and expressed his readiness to make any concessions which his conscience should allow. The Cardinal addressed him patronizingly as his "dear son," and proposed to help him out of all his trouble if he would simply retract his errors and promise to refrain from all conduct tending to create dissatisfaction in the Church. In response to Luther's demand for a specification of his supposed errors, the Cardinal limited his charges to **two points**:—Luther, he said, had denied that the merits of Christ constitute a treasure from which the Church may draw in the dispensing of indulgences, and had maintained that the sacraments cannot benefit unless there be faith in the recipient. He declared that he would not condescend to engage in any argument upon these points, but demanded simply the distinct revocation of the heretical utterances. A conference of three days' duration proving utterly fruitless, the enraged Cardinal bade Luther depart from his presence and never return unless to recant.

A little reflection, however, convinced the haughty prelate that he had been **too hasty**. It was the desire of his master, the Pope, that Luther should in some way be brought to silence; and Cajetan had made not the slightest progress in that

direction. He sent, therefore, upon the same day for two of Luther's most trusted friends, Staupitz, the Vicar-General of Luther's order, and Link, the Prior of the Augustinian convent at Nuremberg, both of whom were with Luther at the Carmelite monastery of the city. As they responded promptly to his summons, he assured them of his kindly feelings toward Luther and his own desire for peace, and urged them to exert their influence to conciliate the fiery monk, whose "deep eyes and wonderful speculations" he was unwilling again to encounter. They reported accordingly at the convent, and Luther, always easily moved by kindness, addressed a courteous letter to the Cardinal, apologizing for any lack of propriety in his speech or demeanor, re-affirming his willingness to recall anything which he had said if convinced of his error, and agreeing to remain silent upon the question of indulgences provided his adversaries would do likewise.

On October 18th, he notified the Cardinal that he could not remain much longer in Augsburg, and, his letters receiving no attention, he two days later left the city quietly by night,—not, however, before he had prepared a formal appeal from the **Pope illy-informed** to the **Pope better-informed**, sending one copy by a trusty friend to Cajetan and posting one for the information of the public upon the wall of the cathedral. Upon his journey homeward, he received a copy of the instructions which the Pope had given to Cajetan, bearing date of August 25th, authorizing him to arrest Luther and clothing him with full power to excommunicate any and all adherents of the latter at his discretion, and to place under the ban any prince, city or university that should afford a refuge to the condemned monk.

The effect of the transactions at Augsburg upon Luther was to greatly diminish his respect for the papal authority and to encourage him in boldly proclaiming the principles which he had there so successfully maintained. If Prierias and Cajetan were able to present no stronger arguments against him, what could he have to fear from other adversaries?

On Aug. 25th, the Cardinal addressed a letter to the Elector Frederick, warning him against affording shelter to the incorrigible monk, urging his immediate surrender to the Romish authorities, or, at least, his banishment from the electoral dominions. The faithful Frederick, perplexed as to his duty but sincerely attached to his fearless subject, sent the letter to Luther, allowing him to reply for himself, and three weeks later dictated a dignified and non-committal reply to the Cardinal in his own name.

After publishing a full account of the occurrences at Augsburg, Luther now, utterly distrusting the Pope, and beginning even to suspect that the latter was the Antichrist spoken of in Revelations, made a formal appeal, in his own behalf and in that of the large number of his countrymen who shared his views, to a General Council of the Church to be held in some secure and accessible locality.

Whilst at Augsburg, Staupitz, as Vicar General of the Augustinians, had absolved him from his vow of obedience to that order, that, in the event of his excommunication, the standing of the order in Germany might not be compromised, and that he might not feel bound by his solemn oath to submit to the discipline thus administered.

Luther now seriously meditated a departure from Wittenberg in order that the Elector and

the University might not be compelled to share the odium which he had brought upon himself. It was, however, decided that he should remain, at least until the edict of excommunication should be actually issued. He accordingly bade a conditional farewell to his congregation and, ready for flight at any moment, quietly applied himself to his ordinary duties, his soul "filled with joy and peace," the sure reward of conscious rectitude.



## CHAPTER VI.

### MILDER MEASURES.

ANXIOUS to arrest the progress of the new doctrines, yet fearing to deal harshly with Luther, the Pope now entered upon a campaign of conciliation.

On Nov. 9th he issued a **proclamation** (published in Germany Dec. 13th), couched in general terms, and maintaining, against the errors of certain monks and preachers, that the divine penalties for sins may be remitted by indulgences, and that the "treasure of the Church," consisting of the merits of Christ and of the saints, is available for this purpose. He thus arrayed the Church more distinctly than before in support of these doctrines, but avoided all direct mention of the name of Luther.

The efforts of Cajetan having failed, a new envoy was despatched from Rome in the person of the Pope's chamberlain, **Karl von Miltitz**. He, being a Saxon nobleman and familiar with the temper of the German people, was well suited for the task assigned him. He bore with him letters from the Pope, addressed to the Elector Frederick, the magistrates of Wittenberg, and many others, in which Luther was denounced as a "son of Satan," and "son of perdition," and the recipients were adjured to render all possible assistance to Miltitz in proceeding against him. As the Elector Frederick was regarded as the chief protector of the heretic, a special effort was made to ensure his good-will by the presentation to him of the **Golden Rose**, an emblem bestowed annually

by the Pope upon some prince as a mark of special favor.

Miltitz, upon his arrival, first of all sought a **conference with Cajetan**. As he traveled through Germany he discovered to his dismay that fully one-half the populace seemed to be upon the side of Luther, and saw in this an additional reason for the greatest caution. He **summoned Tetzl** before him and severely reprimanded him for his appropriation of money received from the sale of indulgences, and for his immoral life. The latter retired in disgrace to the Dominican monastery at Leipzig, where he died a few months afterward. If the papal authorities imagined that their heartless abandonment of the poor monk when he could no longer serve their purposes would appease Luther, they were greatly mistaken. He was stirred with indignation and pity, and addressed a cordial letter of sympathy to Tetzl.

It was not until the opening week of the year 1519 that **Miltitz and Luther** met by appointment at Altenberg. The bearing of the envoy was extremely courteous. He implored Luther with tears to assist in checking the rising tide of discontent, and at the conclusion of the interview dismissed him with a kiss. He agreed to use all his influence at Rome to secure for Luther a hearing before a German bishop, who should after an impartial hearing decide which, if any, of the utterances of the latter were really in conflict with the teachings of the Church. Pending the proposed arbitration, Luther agreed to refrain from further attacks, provided his opponents should also remain silent. He promised to write an **apologetic letter** to the Pope, and to publish an **appeal** to the common people exhorting them to

remain faithful to the Roman Catholic Church. In the latter, written soon afterward, Luther acknowledges the authority of the Pope as subordinate only to that of Christ himself, encourages the common people to seek the intercession of the saints for themselves and the souls in purgatory, and urges them to leave the settlement of the disturbing questions of the day to the theologians, and to interpret his own writings, not as hostile to the Church, but as designed to promote her welfare.

By mutual consent the **Archbishop of Treves** was selected as a suitable person to conduct the proposed investigation, and during the weeks following Miltitz earnestly but fruitlessly sought to perfect the necessary arrangements. Luther, while assenting, took but little interest in the matter, as the result would at best be no more than the specification of distinct charges against him, the final decision being still left to his enemies at Rome. The Pope, on March 29th, before receiving Luther's letter, which was written on the 3d of that month, addressed to him a friendly communication, expressing himself as highly gratified that his "beloved son" has made such large concessions and is now willing to retract his errors, assuring him of full pardon for the violence he had displayed under the provocation of Tetzels imprudent utterances, and then in a tone of condescending kindness repeating the demand for his appearance at Rome for the purpose of renouncing his errors in the presence of the supreme Pontiff. This letter, although never delivered to Luther, furnishes the clearest evidence that the project of Miltitz for a hearing upon German soil met with no favor at Rome, and that the seemingly friendly approaches were but

an attempt to secure by flattery what could not be gained by violence.

Luther had so regarded the whole movement from the beginning, declaring to his friends that the tears of Miltitz were **crocodile-tears** and his kiss a **Judas-kiss**. Yet he met courtesy with courtesy, and made all concessions possible in the interest of peace, still however employing his time in further preparation for the conflict which he now saw to be inevitable.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PUBLIC DEBATE.

SCARCELY had the interview with Miltitz been concluded, when Luther heard anew the **blast of war** in another quarter. Carlstadt, his associate at Wittenberg, had for some time been conducting a pamphlet controversy with **John Eck**, of Ingolstadt, and arrangements had now been made for the holding of a joint debate upon the points at issue. The time and place had not yet been agreed upon, but the energetic champion of Roman orthodoxy had already issued a series of twelve theses (afterwards increased to thirteen), which were very evidently aimed, not at Carlstadt, but at Luther. A copy was sent by Eck to Luther with an invitation to be present at the discussion. As the latter well knew that Carlstadt was a man of more zeal than learning and by no means a match for Eck in debate, and as the assault was chiefly designed to bring his own teaching into disrepute, he, feeling no longer bound by his conditional pledge of silence, resolved not only to be present, but to claim the privilege of taking an active part in the discussion. Many difficulties were thrown in his way, but his indomitable persistence overcame them all.

It was finally agreed that the disputation should be held at **Leipzig**, beginning June 27th. This city, conveniently located and famed for its University, was in itself a suitable place for such a tournament; but the sentiment of the students and burghers was strongly with the dominant

party, not only on the score of doctrine, but because of the jealousy with which the new University at Wittenberg was regarded.

The last of the theses proposed by Eck controverted a position which only Luther had dared to assume, and from which even Carlstadt shrank back in dread, namely, that the supreme power wielded by the Pope **did not rest upon divine right**, but was the result of a purely human arrangement. The introduction of this subject into the controversy, intended by Eck to form the climax of the debate and to concentrate upon his opponent the whole power of the Papacy, whose very foundations were thus assailed, compelled Luther to make a thorough investigation of the origin of the papal power. He read over the whole series of the "decretals" issued by the popes, and on March 13th, only ten days after his submissive letter to Leo, amazed at the violence done to the Scriptures by these supposed infallible utterances, he wrote to a friend that he was unable to decide whether the Pope is Antichrist himself or only his apostle. He was at first tempted to withhold the discoveries thus made for effective use in the approaching debate, but, his desire for the dissemination of the truth overcoming his prudence, he published in advance a series of arguments against the accepted teaching upon this point, and presented his own **broad conception of the Church**, as embracing all true believers, and as dependent for its existence and authority upon no form of outward organization whatsoever.

This was by far the most radical position which he had yet assumed, and for the time being it absorbed all the interest of the opposing parties. The **final decision** upon all points of doctrine had been hitherto supposed to lie with

the visible head of the Church, sitting as the Vicar of Christ in the chair of St. Peter at Rome. If, now, it could be shown that the claims of the Pope were without the sanction of the Scripture, or even of history, the way would appear to be open for the unsettling of confidence in the Church itself, and men would ask by what authority, then, truth could ever be established. It was but gradually that Luther himself abandoned the idea of finding somewhere an external tribunal for the final determination of vital questions of doctrine. Finding the Popes so sadly unreliable, he yet cherished the idea that a **general council** representing the whole Church, although not in itself infallible, would always be preserved from error in doctrine, and hence the confidence with which he had himself appealed to such a tribunal.

The **coming disputation** was looked forward to by both parties with the keenest interest. It was to be a great occasion for Leipzig. Eck was on hand several days in advance. Carlstadt entered, with Luther and Melanchthon, on June 24th, accompanied by two hundred Wittenberg students armed with swords and halberds. From every direction came professors and students, monks and tradesmen. A number of the followers of Huss, from Bohemia, eager to see and hear the brave man who seemed to them about to assume the work of their slain leader, ventured to press in with the great throng. A large hall in the palace had been gorgeously decorated by order of Duke George, who himself watched the proceedings with deep solicitude.

Luther and his friends desired that the entire discussion be **taken down** by competent notaries, in order that there might be no misunderstanding.

or misrepresentations. To this **Eck objected**, but he was finally overruled. He was more successful in the demand, in which he was supported by Duke George, that the whole proceedings be afterward submitted to some prominent university, whose theologians should decide which party was victorious. Luther, on the contrary, desired to submit the case to the judgment of the Church at large. It will be observed that he was thus far in advance of his age in his confident appeal to enlightened public opinion.

The proceedings began on the appointed day with an opening address in the hall of the University, a solemn mass in St. Thomas' church, and a grand procession of citizens, students and strangers, with flaring banners and blare of trumpets, to the scene of conflict.

Four days were consumed by **Eck and Carlstadt** in a fruitless discussion of the relations between the divine sovereignty and the free will of man, in which the superior adroitness and scholastic erudition of the former gave him a great advantage. But little interest was manifested by the spectators until July 4th, when the real champion of the new doctrines stood face to face with his now exultant antagonist.

A graphic portraiture of the two men from the pen of an eye-witness, Mosellanus, has fortunately been preserved. **Luther** is described as of moderate stature, his body worn by care and study. Yet he is apparently in the strength of early manhood. His voice is clear and penetrating. He has a well-stored and ready memory, and is fluent in speech but needlessly caustic at times. In social intercourse he is affable, vivacious and witty. He appeared during the controversy always at his ease, and his countenance,



even under the fiercest attacks of his assailant, was composed and cheerful. He commonly held a bunch of flowers in his hand, with whose fragrance he frequently regaled himself, to the apparent discomfiture of his enemies.

**Eck**, on the contrary, was of powerful physique, with a full, deep voice. The features of his countenance suggested the meat-shop rather than the theologian's chair. His memory was remarkable, but he was neither quick in apprehension nor clear in judgment. He would heap quotation upon quotation from the Church Fathers and scholastic teachers, without regard to order or relevancy to the matter in hand, his apparent object being to astound the hearer with an empty show of learning. When hard pressed, he did not hesitate to shift his ground and claim the position of his assailant as his own. To an admirer of the Ingolstadt champion, on the contrary, he appears as a veritable Hector, bold as a lion, guarding the citadel of the Church's faith, his quiver full of thunderbolts for the extermination of the Wittenbergers.

For four days the discussion between Eck and Luther was confined to the crucial question of the divine right of the **papal supremacy**. Eck claimed that the divine ideal of government had always been a monarchy—that heaven itself is a monarchy, and that Christ can have established His kingdom on earth in no other form. Luther easily met this argument by pointing out that the Church is indeed a monarchy, but that Christ Himself is its only Head, and that otherwise the Church would be a headless body whenever a pope dies. The opposing interpretations of the passage in Matthew concerning the rock upon which Christ declared that He would build His Church

were supported upon both sides by abundant quotations from the great teachers of the Church. In maintaining that the supremacy of the Pope was a modern idea, Luther quoted from the Greek Fathers and from Cyprian, Augustine, the Council of Nice, etc.; but when Eck cited St. Bernard, for whom Luther was known to have a special regard, the latter, undismayed, appealed from Bernard, and all human authorities, to the **Scriptures**. Upon a reference by Luther to the independent position of the Eastern Church, Eck passionately declared that all the Greeks who refused allegiance to Rome were heretics, a view which Luther pronounced utterly shameful.

The **critical point** of the discussion was reached when Eck declared that among the doctrines of Huss, condemned as heretical by the Council of Constance, were those now being maintained by Luther. This was a masterly stroke of dialectic policy. The condemnation of Huss met with the approval of the great mass of the German people, and his Bohemian followers were regarded with the greatest abhorrence as schismatics and heretics, a prejudice which Luther himself still largely shared. Yet the facts of the case were as stated by Eck. What should Luther do? Right bravely does he **meet the issue**, declaring that among the propositions of Huss condemned at Constance were some that were thoroughly Christian and evangelical, particularly those concerning the nature of the Church and the primacy. Eagerly does his adversary seize upon this bold assertion as indicating contempt for the solemn declaration of a great Council. Unwilling to appear in this light, and strongly bound by his own life-long reverence for the decisions of such a general representative body of the Church, Luther tried in

every possible way to defend the Council from the charge of error, but finally referred this phase of the question back to Eck, stoutly maintaining that, at all events, these propositions of Huss and his own were true and confirmed by the highest of all authorities, the Sacred Scriptures.

The discussion of other doctrines which followed constantly drifted back to this absorbing question of the **final source of authority** in the Church. In refusing to recognize the Second Book of Maccabees, Luther found himself again in open conflict with the Church, and upon the question of purgatory he was compelled to face the clear declaration of another Council, that of Florence, held in 1438. In both cases, he calmly maintained his ground.

On July 14th, Luther yielded his place to Carlstadt, whose privilege it was to have the final word upon the side of the Reformers, and after a day or two the disputation was brought to a **hurried close**. Luther returned to his work. Eck remained for nine days in Leipzig as the honored guest of the city, everywhere greeted as victor and loaded with honors. The Universities of Paris and Erfurt, to which the reports of the transactions were referred, refused, upon various grounds, to render any decision.

The great conflict from which so much had been expected appeared to have been **fruitless**. Melancthon, Mosellanus and others greatly deprecated the unseemly strife as not calculated to promote the interests of true piety. Much good was however accomplished by the great interest awakened in many earnest minds.

But important results were at once manifest in the influence of the discussion upon the **two chief champions**. Eck followed up his supposed

triumph with relentless energy. He attempted by flattery of Carlstadt to win him from the support of Luther. He wrote to the Elector Frederick, expressing regret that he had been compelled to administer such a crushing defeat to a member of the latter's university, and admonishing him to burn all the books of the reckless professor upon one heap. To Rome he sent a full report of his great achievement, and urged the Pope to proceed vigorously in the prosecution of the heretic. In short, we must from this time onward regard Eck as Luther's most bitter enemy.

Luther declared to his friends that he had never been so shamefully treated as at Leipzig. He had learned to regard Eck with contempt for his vanity and duplicity. He was disgusted with the general course of the Disputation, declaring that it had a bad beginning and a worse ending. With only one feature of it was he satisfied, namely, the comparatively full discussion of the grounds of the papal authority. By this he had been driven to the clearest conviction that even the **general councils were unreliable**. and to take his stand simply upon the unassailable testimony of the Divine Word itself. This conviction in the mind of Luther gave a new direction to his energies and exerted an incalculable influence upon the course of events. It was the great achievement of the Leipzig Disputation.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OPEN ENMITY.

THE encounter at Leipzig served to fix the gaze of multitudes anew upon Luther. It proved that he could not only assail the great errors of the day in written propositions, but that he could hold his own in free discussion with the foremost debater in Germany. The very topic which Eck had so shrewdly introduced in order to entrap his antagonist, *i. e.*, the supremacy of the Pope, proved most fruitful in leading the Reformer to an advanced position of hostility against the fundamental principle of the Romish hierarchy. The battle evidently was not yet closed, but the pale Wittenberg professor now stood forth to the view of the world as a warrior fully armed and eager for the fray.

During the three years which followed, he was never without an assailant, and the heaping of maledictions upon his name was considered the surest way to ecclesiastical preferment.

In April, 1518, a large convention of Franciscan Monks, held at Jüterbog, drew up formal charges against him to be laid before the Bishop of Brandenburg, accusing him, in coarse terms, of heresy upon eight articles of the Catholic faith. Luther rebuked their presumption and threatened to expose their ignorance if the offence were repeated, but not until Eck had rushed to their defence did he deign to make a formal reply to the slanderous attack.

Jerome Emser, a friend of Eck, who had been

present at the Leipzig Disputation, published what purported to be a friendly defence of Luther against the suspicions of sympathy with the Bohemians awakened by his championship of certain propositions of John Huss. It was really a treacherous attempt to bring upon Luther all the odium attaching to the very name of the Bohemians in the minds of the common people. The coat-of-arms of Emser, an ibex, was printed upon the title page. The malice and hypocrisy of the publication aroused in Luther the intensest indignation, and he replied with fierce denunciation in a tract entitled, *To Emser, the Goat*, proposing to hunt down this impertinent beast. Emser replied with coarse slander, calling Luther a dog, and Eck soon came to his assistance with caustic comments upon Luther's ridiculous chase, declaring that the latter, with only a few ignorant laymen in his following, was attempting to overwhelm the whole body of the intelligent clergy. Eck then set out in person for Rome, there, as Luther said, to stir up the abyss of the lower world against him.

Within a very short period nearly all the universities of Germany and France became interested in the questions at issue. Realizing only too well the occasion for protest against the abuses of the day, yet wedded to the traditional doctrines and dependent largely upon the favor of the Romish Church, they commonly avoided definite official utterances. In August and September, 1519, however, the universities at Cologne and Louvain formally condemned Luther's works, and demanded that their author be forced to a public recantation. Their action was at once approved by Hadrian, of Tortosa, the chief official of the Church in Spain. Luther did not receive a copy

of the document until the following March, when he replied briefly and scornfully.

**Duke George**, of Saxony, who before the Leipzig Disputation had been disposed to give the new doctrines at least a fair hearing, became soon afterward a determined opponent, and in December, 1519, wrote to the Elector urging him to take prompt measures to free himself from the reproach of cherishing heresy in his domains.

In January, 1520, the **Bishop of Misnia** issued a decree condemning Luther's demand for a restoration of the cup to the laity in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This was of special significance as being the first official utterance of a German bishop against Luther. He replied vigorously, refusing to acknowledge the document as genuine, attributing it to some subordinate official of the episcopal residence at Stolpe, and as such condemning it.

Meanwhile a defence of "the apostolic chair" appeared in Leipzig, written by a Franciscan monk, **Augustine of Alveld**. It was weak in argument, and as it was written in Latin, which only the educated could understand, Luther did not regard it as worthy of notice until it appeared in a German translation, when he prepared, as an antidote, a tract for the common people setting forth the nature of the Church as the invisible assembly of true believers, all of whom are, by virtue of their Christian calling, priests before God.

Luther's appeal from the Pope and his representatives to a general council brought out a fresh attack from his old enemy at Rome, **Prierias**, in which the latter reiterated his extravagant views of the supreme power of the Pope. Luther scornfully republished the entire document, with a few running comments, allowing the ridiculous claims of the fanatical papist to furnish their own refutation.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FRIENDS, NEW AND OLD.

VERY peculiar indeed were the personal relations of **Frederick the Wise**, the Elector of Saxony, with his irrepressible subject. Once had he heard the latter preach. He read his writings with deep interest, accepted the fundamental articles of his teaching, communicated with him frequently through intermediaries, sent him presents, requested favors of him, protected him,—and yet never met him personally. The foremost of the princes of Germany, ruling over a people bound in thralldom to the existing Church, providentially placed in a position to command the greatest consideration for his wishes at the hand of both Pope and Emperor, he could serve Luther and the cause of evangelical liberty best by refraining from public demonstrations of sympathy, and simply demanding an open hearing and fair treatment for the reputed heretic. Luther appreciated the measure of favor thus granted him and asked no more. He trusted the honest heart of his sovereign, but never depended upon him for actual protection against his enemies. In the hour of greatest peril, he regarded himself rather as the protector of his prince.

A few weeks before the Leipzig Disputation, the University of Wittenberg had welcomed as professor of ancient languages, etc., a young man of remarkable attainments in scholarship, **Philip Melancthon**. He was the direct counterpart of Luther in physical and mental endowments, but



of an equally earnest and truth-loving temper. Each at once recognized in the other the qualities needed to supplement his own deficiencies, and a beautiful friendship was formed which endured through life. The advantage to Luther of having constantly at his right hand this quiet and painstaking student, versed in the current languages of the day and in the ancient tongues of Scripture, the master of a clear and flowing style in composition, sincerely devoted to the defence of the same principles, cannot be overestimated. His *Loci Communes*, forming the first systematic presentation of the doctrines held by the Reformers, was pronounced by Luther an "inspired" book. In September, 1519, he took a position in advance of Luther himself in boldly declaring that the Romish doctrine of Transubstantiation (or the actual transformation of the elements in the Lord's Supper into the body and blood of Christ) was entirely without scriptural warrant. From this time forward Melanchthon clung to Luther, rendering substantial and timely aid in many a conflict.

The bold spirit of the Reformer, seconded by the amazing talent of his youthful co-laborer, enlisted the hearty sympathy of the Humanists, and words of encouragement flowed in upon him from distant regions. Wittenberg was recognized as a centre of learning as well as of piety, and it was of immense importance that the "Preceptor of Germany" should be seen not only in hearty accord with its chief religious teacher, but humbly following him as a planet follows the sun. Luther rejoiced in all this sympathy, but never for a moment accommodated his own earnest practical spirit to the trifling and worldly temper which marked the leaders of the Humanistic

movement. Unless inspired with something of his religious fervor, they could not walk very far in his company. With him, learning must be the handmaid of religion.

The large demand for the writings of Luther, both in their original form and in translations, in France, England and Spain, attested the rapid increase in the number of his adherents among the intelligent class of the Christian world, and the enthusiasm of the throngs of students at his own University filled him with the brightest hopes for the regeneration of his beloved Fatherland.

The true character of John Huss, who had been burned as a heretic in 1415, now becoming known to Luther through the study of his works and intercourse with prominent men among his followers, he acknowledged that he had himself long been teaching the doctrines of Huss without knowing it. He, in consequence, entered into the friendliest relations with the Christians of Bohemia, who welcomed him as the successor of their lamented leader.

As the rage of his enemies increased, Luther was much concerned lest his course should prove injurious to the interests of his kind patron, the Elector Frederick, and he frequently thought of withdrawing from Wittenberg on that account. Yet he felt that he had been divinely called to the work in which he was engaged, and dare not surrender it without the clearest indications of the will of God. He knew that he would be cordially received in Bohemia, and would there be in comparative safety, but his influence in Germany would be forfeited were he to accept hospitality in that quarter. Just at this juncture, two fearless young German nobles came to his aid, Ulrich von Hutten and Francis von Sickingen. Hutten

had in his youth been placed in a cloister, but effected his escape from the tyranny of the monks. He visited Rome upon several occasions and was familiar with the corruption which there prevailed. Being present at the Diet of Augsburg in 1518, and hearing Cajetan's contemptuous reference to the stupid Germans, he resolved to cast aside all considerations of prudence and devote himself entirely to the work of arousing the German Nobility to an uncompromising resistance of the proud Italians. In 1517 he had published a treatise of Laurentius Valla, exposing the utterly fraudulent character of the reputed "Donation of Constantine," by which that emperor was said to have conveyed the imperial control of the western portion of his domains, or the "Roman Empire of the German Nation," to the Pope, and which was relied upon as the basis of the papal authority in Germany. Luther was amazed beyond measure to discover from this document that the haughty power which had for centuries been oppressing his countrymen was founded upon a forgery, and he set himself at once to the task of utterly demolishing the entire structure of the Papacy which had been erected upon this sandy foundation. Hutton, upon his part, assured Luther that he would stand by him at all hazards. He was unfortunately not himself in position to be of much practical service, but he had a powerful ally in his friend Sickingen. The latter was a knight of abundant means, a courageous warrior, the possessor of several strong fortresses, and a zealous champion of the political rights of the German States. His attention having been called to Luther's perilous situation, he in January, 1520, cordially invited the latter to accept his hospitality and protection. The opening of this

unexpected place of refuge appeared to Luther providential, and greatly encouraged him. He was thus enabled to continue his bold assaults upon the papal iniquities, prepared at any moment to retire from Wittenberg and still prosecute his work upon German soil, sustained by the very foremost of his country's brave defenders.

## CHAPTER X.

### A TIRELESS PEN.

AFTER the Leipzig Disputation, Luther, now thoroughly aroused, and irritated by the false reports circulated in regard to the course of the debate, determined to carry his cause before a wider tribunal. He therefore set about the preparation of a series of **Elucidations** (*resolutiones*) of the theses which he had maintained, discussing at the same time one or two important doctrines not then touched upon, i. e., justification by faith and the impurity of all human efforts. He now in the strongest terms affirmed that the Holy Scriptures constitute the only infallible authority in matters of faith.

In the spring of 1519 appeared his **Commentary upon Galatians**, as the outgrowth of his academic lectures. Entering fully into the spirit of the apostle, he declared that this was his own epistle—that he was wedded to it. It seemed to him to have been written expressly for the purpose of combating the very errors then prevalent in the Church. With glowing earnestness, he applied its doctrine of free grace, and traced the fundamental distinction between the demands of the Law and the life-giving message of the Gospel.

About the same time, he began the publication of a running commentary (modestly entitled, "Labors") upon the **Psalms**, seeking thus to deepen the spirit of true devotion and thankfulness among those who had been delivered from the bondage of idle ceremonies.

In September, receiving word of the serious illness of the Elector, he prepared, as a message of comfort which might prove timely for his honored friend and be helpful to others in similar distress, one of the most strikingly original of his compositions. As the superstitious populace were accustomed to call upon fourteen special saints in time of trouble, he designates his tract **Tessarakas** (The Fourteen), and depicts the comforts of the Gospel in view of the evils that threaten man from seven directions, i. e., from within, before, behind, beneath, to right, to left and above, and then displays the manifold blessings that reach us from the same directions, last and chief among which is Christ Himself.

In May, 1520, appeared an exhaustive dissertation upon "**Good Works**," which vividly portrayed the necessity of faith as the basis of all Christian activity, and as the never-failing motive for the cheerful fulfilment of every duty devolving upon the child of God. It was a complete vindication of the Evangelical doctrines against the charge of encouraging the neglect of moral obligations. Yet how different these works of faith from the slavish exercises by which multitudes were vainly seeking to merit the favor of God!

But the course of events was rapidly bearing the Reformer on to bolder utterances. Within the closing months of the year 1520, he gave to the press the three documents which are by common consent acknowledged as his greatest reformatory publications. These are entirely distinct in character, full of life and energy, and together cover the whole field of needed reformation—in secular affairs, in the administration of the ordinances of the Church, and in the conception of the individual Christian life.

The first of these was the **Address to the Nobility** of the German Nation. Many circumstances had combined to stir the national feeling in Germany. The political complications resulting from the constant interference of Roman legates, their demand for money to carry on the supposed threatening war with the Turks, the ecclesiastical taxes exacted upon all manner of pretexts—were boldly denounced by many of the most influential knights of the realm. Luther now, impelled by a deeper motive to resist in every way the sacrilegious pretensions of the papacy, gave free scope to his patriotic instincts. He calls upon all the Nobles of the land, including the Emperor himself, to recognize the sacredness of their high offices, and boldly espouse the cause of the people against their foreign oppressors. He notes “**three walls**” of defence with which the papists had fortified their modern Jericho: first, the claim of secular supremacy; secondly, the sole right of the Pope to interpret the Scriptures; thirdly, the assertion that only the Pope can call a general council of the Church. He himself demolishes these walls with a few stirring blasts upon the trumpet of the divine Word, and then urges the Nobility to assert their God-given rights, summon a general council, and address themselves in earnest to the work of reformation. He then presents a catalogue of crying political and social abuses of the day, denouncing them in the scathing language of intensest passion. The effect was indescribable. The Address was at once the subject of discussion in every hamlet. Multitudes who cared but little for the religious questions of the day rallied around the standard of Luther, hailing him as the coming deliverer of their fatherland.

But Luther was already occupied in another

direction. It was the Church, after all, that lay nearest to his heart, and he utters a bitter lamentation over the **Babylonian Captivity** which has robbed even her sacred ordinances of their power to bless the humble followers of Christ. He bewails a three-fold bondage in which the Holy Supper is held: first, the withholding of one-half of the sacrament—the cup—from the laity; secondly, the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation; thirdly, the impious transformation of the simple feast of love into the sacrifice of the mass. The discussion here leads him to assail the very foundations of the Roman Catholic system. Having heard that he is to be very shortly summoned to recant, under penalty of excommunication, he mockingly offers this fresh assault as the beginning of his recantation.

Amid the storm of invective which now poured upon him, and the new perils to which he was exposed by the publication of the bull of excommunication, Luther was unruffled in his joyous confidence in God. Having smitten the enemy, he now turns to the more congenial task of depicting the blessedness of the true believer. His **Liberty of a Christian Man**, appearing in November, is a profound portraiture of the higher spiritual life which lifts above the cares of earth and releases from slavish fear of the Law. It thus met directly the deepest religious longings of the age. The author forwarded a copy to the Pope, accompanying it with a letter expressing personal regard for the character of Leo.

A large number of tracts upon practical themes were given to the press during the years now under consideration, discussing in vigorous German the defective and oppressive marriage laws, usury, private confession, preparation for



death, the proper use of the sacraments, etc. A suggestion from the Elector led to the preparation of a series of popular discourses upon the pericopes, or appointed scriptural readings for each Sunday in the year, in which his fervent devotional spirit found scope for exercise and which attained a wide circulation.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE PAPAL BULL.

ALMOST eleven months had elapsed after the Leipzig Disputation when, on June 15th, 1520, the long threatened **Bull of Excommunication** was issued at Rome. As its preparation had been entrusted to Luther's bitterest enemies, including the relentless Eck, it lacked nothing in severity of tone. Starting with an impious appeal to the offended majesty of the Lord, it invokes His aid and that of Peter, Paul and all the saints against the wild beast that has been devastating the vineyard. It brands forty-one of his Theses as "heretical, false or offensive," condemns them all, and orders that all his books be burned wherever found. Sixty days were allowed to him and his adherents for recantation, under penalty of final excommunication. All faithful subjects of the Church, secular and ecclesiastical, are summoned to use their utmost efforts to place the person of the stubborn heretic in the power of the Pope.

To Eck was assigned the task of promulgating the fateful document in Germany; but the zealous efforts of the willing emissary served but to reveal the amazing **revulsion of feeling** which had already been effected among the once submissive Germans. Many, enlightened by the writings of Luther himself, utterly denied the authority of the Pope in the premises. German patriots were filled with fiery indignation at this attempt to condemn a fellow-countryman without a hearing. The extravagant language of the document and

the employment of a personal enemy in its promulgation gave excuse for questioning its genuineness. The people scornfully called it "Eck's Bull." Luther, in a stirring tract, summoned the Emperor and princes to resent the impertinent presumption of this "Bull of Antichrist." On Nov. 17th, he drew up, and immediately published in Latin and German, a renewal of his **appeal to a general council**, denouncing the Pope as an unjust judge, a heretic, an anti-Christian opponent of the Holy Scriptures, and a despiser of the true Church.

It was not until September that the **publication of the Bull** in Germany was actually begun, encountering then almost universal opposition. The papal legate, Aleander, secured authority from the Emperor for the burning of the books of Luther in the Netherlands. Luther responded by publicly **casting to the flames** the bull, and with it the entire body of the papal laws, amidst the wild jubilation of the students of the University.

The **battle was now joined** in earnest. Luther was, indeed, surrounded by friends. His own prince, the Elector Frederick, though carefully avoiding any public endorsement of his teaching, could be relied upon to demand at least the ordinary forms of justice in the treatment of his loyal subject; but even he could not permanently resist the mandate of his superiors.

With the keenest anxiety all eyes were now turned upon the young Emperor, **Charles V.** The latter was indebted for his imperial crown in no small degree to the support of the German princes, and it was fondly hoped that, upon fuller information, he would prove a valiant defender of at least the political rights of the oppressed Germans, which now found their boldest advocate in the monk of Wittenberg.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE HERO AT WORMS.

ACCORDING to the papal theory, it was the **duty of the Emperor** to use all his power in the suppression of heresy. A bull of excommunication should be followed by the much-dreaded Ban of the Empire. To secure this was now the chief aim of the new papal legate, the unscrupulous and tireless Aleander.

The Emperor cared little for the religious disputes of the day, and had no sympathy with the national feeling of his German subjects. Trained as a zealous Roman Catholic in Spain, he would under ordinary circumstances have sacrificed Luther without hesitancy at the bidding of the Pope. He now, however, resolved to make **political capital** out of the discontent of Germany. He was himself just at this juncture very desirous of securing some concessions from the Pope, which the latter was little disposed to grant. Presuming that he could at any time quiet the rising storm, he refused therefore to speak the word of command, and even fanned the flame of hostility toward the papacy.

In accordance with this policy, he on Nov. 28th sent a **message to the Elector Frederick**, requesting him to bring his Wittenberg professor with him to the Diet soon to assemble at Worms. This order was, however, upon the urgency of the papal party, afterwards revoked.

On Feb. 13th, **Aleander** presented to the Diet an official communication from the Pope,

calling upon the Emperor and princes of the realm to at once take measures to make the second and final Bull against the Reformer (issued in January) effective. The appeal was supported by the legate in a wily oration three hours in length, in which he traced the resemblance of Luther's teaching to that of the hated Bohemians, and emphasized his rejection not only of the papal supremacy, but of the final authority of a general council as well. As designed, this address alienated from Luther not a few who sympathized with him in his assaults upon the papacy, but who still regarded the general councils as infallible and as their only resource for the correction of grievances. The Emperor, who had meanwhile secured the desired favors at the hands of the Pope, expressed himself as now ready to meet the desire of the latter, and accordingly laid before the Diet the draft of an edict, condemning the books of Luther and ordering his arrest.

After a heated discussion, which almost led to blows, it was reported to the Emperor that such a course would produce disturbance throughout all Germany, and he was requested to allow Luther the privilege of publicly recalling his heretical utterances. Should he do this, it was hinted that it might be well to hear his views "upon other points," *i. e.*, upon national questions. To this the Emperor agreed, and a courteous summons was at once forwarded to the Reformer, assuring him "safe conduct" to and from the Diet. The papists were enraged, but helpless.

Luther promptly decided to obey the call. Hearing that he would be expected to recant, he said: "This shall be my recantation: I have said that the Pope is the representative of Christ (on earth); this I now recall, and declare that the

Pope is the enemy of Christ and an emissary of the devil."

On April 2d, after completing an uncompromising rejoinder to the pamphlet of an assailant, Catharinus, he set out **upon the journey**, preceded by the imperial herald, and greeted on every hand by great throngs of his fellow-countrymen. Received with enthusiasm at Erfurt, he remained there over Sunday, and preached a fervent sermon upon the text: "Peace be unto you." Just as the party drew near to Worms, there was published an edict forbidding the dissemination of the books of Luther and thus clearly indicating the temper of the monarch. In face of this, even the herald hesitated to advance. Spalatin, the Elector's chaplain, sent a warning, pointing to the fate of Huss. But the dauntless champion of the truth replied: "I would enter Worms, though there were as many devils there as tiles upon the roofs of the houses."

In the streets of the city he was met by a cavalcade of prominent personages and, surrounded by a throng of two thousand of the populace, conducted to his inn. As he alighted from his carriage he fervently ejaculated: "God will be with me."

On the next day, April 17th, he was summoned **before the Diet**. It was a notable assembly—the Emperor, six electoral princes, whole ranks of the lower nobility of Germany, and an imposing array of papal officials. Luther fully appreciated the gravity of the occasion and at first appeared overawed. He was told that he was merely to answer **two questions**: first, whether he was the author of certain books, whose titles were read to him; and secondly, whether, if so, he was willing to recall their contents. **To the first**

question he replied in the affirmative. As the second was of such importance, he requested that a short time be granted him for the preparation of his answer—a favor which was reluctantly granted.

When recalled late on the following day, he was asked: "Do you defend all of your books, or are you willing to recall some things." Adapting his reply (given in Latin) to the new form of the question, he declared that some of his books are purely devotional in character, and commended even by his enemies. The second class of his writings are those directed against the corruptions of the papacy: to recall these would but give encouragement to that horrible tyranny. The third class consists of his publications against individuals. In these he confessed to have sometimes used intemperate language. The doctrines taught in these he is willing to recall whenever refuted by citations from the prophets or evangelists. He closed with an **eloquent and fearless appeal** to the Emperor and princes to meet bravely the responsibility which God had laid upon them. Upon request, the response was repeated in German. The papal spokesman, after consultation, pronounced the reply of Luther irrelevant, declared that a refutation of his teachings was unnecessary, as they had been already condemned by the Council of Constance, and demanded a plain, direct answer to the question whether he would **recant or not**. Rising to the height of the occasion, he then uttered the immortal words:

"Unless convinced by the testimony of Scripture or evident reasons (for I trust neither the Pope nor councils alone, since it is certain that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by my own writings, as

cited, and my conscience is held captive by the Word of God. Recant I neither can nor will, since it is unsafe and dishonest to act against conscience. \* \* I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. So help me God! Amen."

In the midst of the tempest that ensued, the Emperor rose and dissolved the Diet. Summoning the members again very early the next morning, he expressed his regret at having so long parleyed with the contumacious monk, and declared his purpose, after returning the latter to Wittenberg according to his pledge, to at once **proceed to final measures** against him.

Moved in part by sympathy, more largely by fears of insurrection, the Diet pleaded for delay, in order to effect, if possible, some compromise. The Emperor granted a respite of three days. Now it was that the fortitude of Luther was most severely tested. A large **commission of prominent officials** known to be kindly disposed toward him was appointed by the Diet. For days these men pleaded with him, exhausting all their skill in endeavoring to shake his resolution. They waived entirely the point of submission to the Pope, and implored him to submit his writings without reserve to the judgment of a general council—as he had once been willing to do. They argued that bloodshed would thus be prevented; that quite a time must elapse before such a council could be assembled, and that the delay would be favorable to his cause; that the very calling of a council, in face of the condemnation already pronounced by the Pope, would be a great victory for him; and that its decisions would in all probability be in his favor. But in vain! Luther was willing to submit his writings to any candid tribunal, but insisted that they and all



human documents must be finally tested by the **Word of God alone**. Upon this principle he staked life and all, leaving the results with God.

But what would now become of Luther, was the question upon every hand. Even though the pledge of safe-conduct, violated in the case of Huss, should now be faithfully kept, it would expire within twenty-one days. Should he then be left at the mercy of his foes?

A plan was soon perfected. Luther started off amid the plaudits of his friends. After some days' travel the imperial guard was dismissed. As the coach in which he rode with his traveling companion from the monastery and his friend, Amsdorf, was passing through a shaded road in the forest, a band of horsemen suddenly fell upon them. The monk, terrified, was allowed to escape. Amsdorf made a show of noisy resistance for a time, and was then suffered to proceed with the frightened coachman. Luther was led by a circuitous route to the **Wartburg**, a strong castle overlooking the town of Eisenach.

Meanwhile, the **ban of the Empire** was pronounced. The severest penalties were threatened to any person who should harbor the outlaw, or give him food or drink. Every faithful subject was commanded to aid in arresting him and sending him to the Emperor. His books were to be burned and their printing forever interdicted. The language of the document was certainly sufficiently vigorous, but not unwillingly does the pen of history record the facts,—that it harmed no one, that it was the last of its kind ever promulgated, and that its dark anathemas can to-day be deciphered only in the radiance reflected from the name of its intended victim.

## PERIOD III.

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### PRACTICAL REFORMATION. A. D. 1521-1546.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE WARTBURG EXILE.

THE sudden disappearance of Luther awakened **intense feeling** throughout Germany. Many at once concluded that he had been murdered. The shrewd Aleander surmised the truth, and reported to Rome: "The Saxon fox has hidden the monk." Very effectually was he concealed, his nearest friends having for a long time no certain knowledge of his place of refuge. The Emperor and his advisers, fully occupied with the political difficulties surrounding them, made no serious attempt to capture the fugitive, being satisfied to have, as they supposed, imposed silence upon him.

For the Reformer himself the change of surroundings was exhilarating. For the first time in his life he now lived in **ease and luxury**. He roamed through the capacious grounds of the castle overlooking his beloved Eisenach, gathering berries in the woods and listening to the warbling of the birds. **Attired as a knight**, with sword by his side and a golden chain about his neck, he rode at will with his valet through the neighboring villages, greatly enjoying the humor of the situation. Occasionally he joined in the chase,

but accounted it poor sport. His sympathies were all with the poor hunted hares, which seemed to him a picture of the persecuted Christians of the day, while the cruel hounds were cardinals and bishops. He would rather have hunted the bears and wolves that were devastating the Church. Thus even his diversions were constantly made to furnish illustrations and suggestions for the great work in which his whole soul was enlisted.

Bitterly does he lament his enforced "idleness;" yet he was **always busy**. With no books at hand but his Greek and Hebrew Bibles, he at once addressed himself to earnest work, and within three weeks had several important documents well under way. He completed his commentary upon the "**Magnificat**," sending it to the publisher early in June. This had been preceded by an exposition of **Psalm lxxviii.**, which breathed the spirit of triumphant joy, and constituted one of the profoundest of all his writings upon the experience of Christ.

With impatience, but with unsparing severity, he **replied to various publications** of his adversaries, who were appalled to find that the excommunicated and outlawed monk was as terrible in exile as when holding his seat of honor in the University.

Among the positive results of the quiet hours of reflection in his "Patmos," was a clear conviction upon the subject of **monastic vows**. He had long held that the enforced celibacy of the priests was, according to 1 Tim. iv. 1, a doctrine of devils; but the vows of monks and nuns, having been voluntarily assumed, appeared to him to be of binding force. He felt that their results were evil, and longed to break the yoke of bondage

under which so many thousands were groaning; yet he would not countenance wrong nor advance a single step without clear scriptural authority. The arguments adduced by Carlstadt and Melancthon seemed to him insufficient. At length he found an adequate ground for the abrogation of these vows in the mistaken views with which they had been assumed. They were regarded as works of merit—a means of gaining the favor of God—and were hence directly **opposed to the gospel plan** of salvation by faith. Being opposed to the Gospel, they were sinful and could have no binding authority.

For Luther, to see the truth was to be resistlessly impelled to announce it before the world. With no regard for the possible consequences, his calm, logical argument is hurled as an **emancipation proclamation** from the castle walls. On every hand, convent doors are thrown open, and the entire structure of monasticism is doomed.

The Romish priesthood had long maintained its hold upon the masses through an unscrupulous use of the **confessional**. It soon became known that this secret agency was being employed to warn the multitudes against the arch-heretic, and to command them, under penalty of eternal death, to destroy his writings. To counteract this scheme, the great father-confessor of awakened Germany issued his **Instruction for the Confessing**. He did not, as some others, advocate the abolition of the custom of auricular confession, as he regarded it, when rightly employed, as a valuable means of consoling and strengthening the weak. He insisted only that it should be purely voluntary, and that every Christian layman was empowered to conduct it, since its authority was derived not from the station of the administrant,

but solely from the divine words of pardon which it announced to the penitent. Thus conceived, the ordinance was deprived entirely of its value to the hierarchy as a means of terrifying and controlling the masses. In this form, it has continued in the Church to the present day, except where supplanted by the general confession of the "preparatory service."

With amazement Luther now learned that the Cardinal-archbishop, Albrecht of Mayence, the former patron of Tetzels, had begun the sale of indulgences upon a grand scale at Halle. That the foremost ecclesiastical prince of Germany should have the effrontery to thus ignore all that had occurred in the stirring half-decade just passed seemed incredible. The author of the Ninety-five Theses at once prepared a fierce denunciation of the "new idolatry at Halle," but, induced by the alarmed Elector, consented to delay its publication and content himself with an exceedingly plain letter to the Archbishop. He demands from him a reply within fourteen days, and declares that, if a satisfactory response is not received within that time, he will show the whole world the difference between a bishop and a wolf. The proud cardinal hastened to prostrate himself as a "poor sinful worm" at the feet of the outlawed heretic, and the sale of indulgences ceased.

But it was only under compulsion that Luther "wasted" the precious hours in controversial writing. His favorite labors were those devoted to the edification of the little band of persecuted believers. He rejoiced in the opportunity now afforded of continuing his Latin **Exposition of the Psalms**, but soon turned from this to the still more congenial task of preparing sermons in German upon the appointed scripture lessons for

the successive Sundays of the church-year. These were published in sections under the title, **Church Postils**, the series being completed in later years by friends of the Reformer. Besides being eagerly bought by the laity, they were read from many pulpits and became models for thousands of similar discourses, proving thus a most effective means of bringing the great truths of salvation home to the hearts of the people. Luther himself considered them the best of all his writings. While outspoken in denunciation of papal errors, they emphasize the great doctrines of repentance and grace, and are pervaded by a tone of lofty confidence in the final triumph of the truth.

Toward the close of the year 1521 was begun the greatest work of the Reformer's life, the translation of the Bible from the original tongues into the language of the common people. For such a task he had peculiar fitness. His vivid imagination and his deep spiritual nature enabled him to catch the spirit of the sacred writers, while his thorough familiarity with the common language and the aspirations of his own beloved countrymen enabled him to express the inspired thought in simple, touching phrase which made it appear almost as a new revelation. No pains were spared to make the work as nearly perfect as possible. He studied the language of the peasants in their homes and upon the street, and talked with mechanics as they plied their trade. Portions of the work were given to the press from time to time, and within less than three months the entire New Testament was completed. It was only, however, after thorough revision in conjunction with his learned associates at Wittenberg, that the work appeared in September, 1522.

## CHAPTER II.

### A TEMPEST STILLED.

THE unrighteous edict of Worms served to reveal alike to friend and foe how thoroughly the teachings of the despised monk had permeated all classes of the German nation. Feeble efforts were made here and there to enforce its requirements in the burning of the books of Luther, but these could but awaken ridicule. On every hand the power of Pope and Emperor was defied. Anonymous pamphlets, passing from hand to hand, depicted with keenest satire the course of events at Worms.

The University at Wittenberg, deprived of its illustrious head, was still regarded as the centre of spiritual illumination. To it eager students flocked from distant lands. The course of study was greatly enlarged under the direction of Luther, and vigorous young scholars of evangelical views were called to fill the newly-established professorial chairs. The popularity of the youthful professor of Greek, Melanchthon, was unbounded. All learning was there made subservient to the proper understanding and illustration of the Scriptures, and the dauntless spirit of the great Reformer appeared still to pervade the whole community.

Such enthusiasm could not long remain without practical results. Why should the abuses be longer tolerated which public sentiment now so heartily condemned? Should all this throbbing energy be wasted in mere words? O, for an

intrepid leader! Melanchthon, the timid student, could not undertake such a task. Where should the new Luther be found?

How natural that incompetent, impetuous spirits should now come to the front, and that, as the excited populace followed them, reckless violence should mark the first assaults upon long-established customs. In the Augustinian monastery of the town, a monk, named **Gabriel Zwilling**, entering the pulpit which Luther had long filled, assailed with vehemence the abuses of the mass, demanded that the cup be granted to the laity, denounced the monastic system, and finally, with twelve associates, publicly renounced his allegiance to the monastery. The incident caused great excitement in the community, and **was accompanied with violent demonstrations**. Similar scenes were enacted at Erfurt and elsewhere. A **general convention of the Augustinian Order of Germany**, held at Wittenberg in January (at which, however, but few officials from abroad were present), proclaimed that no one should be compelled to remain in a monastery against his own convictions of duty, and admonished all, whether departing or remaining, to conduct themselves peaceably and devote themselves to useful labors. This action was taken in pursuance of advice received directly from the absent "brother" at the Wartburg, and was in reality an entire surrender of the principle upon which the maintenance of the monasteries depended. Many of the monks availed themselves of the liberty thus granted, but failed to observe the accompanying admonition, and the disturbances continued.

Among the professors at the University was **Carlstadt**, a man of marked talent and restless energy, but fickle, conceited and imprudent—in



argument or action always taking the second step before the first. After the Leipzig Disputation he had withdrawn his support from Luther and again courted the favor of the Church, but he now suddenly appeared as a reformer far in advance of Luther. He declared it to be not only a privilege but the duty of the clergy to marry, pronounced it a sin to remain in a monastery, and proposed all manner of social innovations. He upon his own responsibility administered the cup to the laity, made contempt for the established fast-days a test of piety, and urged the populace to tear down the pictures in the churches and destroy the altars.

In the midst of the tumultuous scenes which followed, there appeared three men from Zwickau, calling themselves prophets. They claimed to have received direct revelations from God in visions, and to be authorized to establish a new spiritual kingdom. They denounced infant baptism as especially obnoxious, and announced that the end of the world was at hand. Multitudes were deceived by the exalted claims of these men. Even Melanchthon wavered and knew not how to meet their arguments, receiving one of them, a former pupil of his, into his own house. Carlstadt at once became a zealous convert, adopting the wildest mystical notions, and advising his students to abandon their studies and apply themselves to useful labor. Soon all was in confusion. Hundreds forsook the University and departed to their homes, carrying the fanatical ideas throughout all Germany. It was reported that even Melanchthon was about to leave in despair.

And all this was at Wittenberg, the centre of evangelical truth. The natural result, exclaimed the adversaries, of the teachings of the heretical monk!

But above the tumult there was one unclouded mind—one heart undaunted. As by instinct, Luther, from the meagre reports reaching him, **comprehended the situation** of his beloved Wittenbergers, and resolved to prove his loyalty to them and to the greater cause imperiled by their folly. Already in December he had, in knightly disguise, journeyed to Wittenberg and made personal investigation of the condition of affairs. Upon his return, he had published his **Faithful Warning against Insurrection**. He had calmly viewed the vagaries of the Zwickau prophets; but now, as the agitation overleaps all bounds, he notifies the Elector that he proposes to bid farewell to his secure retreat and **return to the post of duty**. A bold step, indeed! He is still an outcast from the Church and an outlaw in the land. The disturbances at Wittenberg have alienated many of his friends and encouraged his enemies to fresh zeal. The representatives of the nation, assembled at Nuremberg, have just resolved on aggressive measures to make the edict of Worms effective. The Elector can afford no protection outside of the castle walls, and plainly tells Luther so. Promptly comes the response: "I go forth under a far higher than an Elector's protection. \* \* \* He whose faith is strongest will in these days prove the best protector."

Arriving at Wittenberg, March 6th, a few days are spent in quiet consultation with friends. On Sunday, the 9th, he ascends the pulpit of the parish church and in a series of **eight daily sermons** announces his own views upon the questions in dispute and carries with him resistlessly the convictions of his hearers. He first summons them to serious reflection in view of approaching

death and judgment, and presses home the great themes of repentance and faith. He then cordially applauds the energy of their faith and their courage in being the first to abolish the abominable idolatry of the mass. With the tone of an aggrieved father, he deplures their readiness to follow strange leaders and censures their blind zeal and their lack of Christian love in demanding outward compliance with the new order of things upon the part of those whose consciences are not yet sufficiently enlightened. He declares that no one can be driven to faith, but that the Word must be diligently preached and allowed to gradually, by its own power, put error to flight.

The success of this paternal appeal was immediate and complete. The calm demeanor of the great leader, his persuasive eloquence, and the clearness of the principles announced—in striking contrast with the inconsistent ravings of the prophets—proved irresistible. Not a single voice was raised in opposition. Zwilling abandoned his wild notions and became a disciple of Luther and a humble preacher of the Gospel. Carlstadt relapsed into silence. The storm was stilled. All fears vanished, and peace reigned at Wittenberg. The pilot was at the helm.

## CHAPTER III.

### RENEWED ACTIVITY AT WITTENBERG.

NATURALLY, without fear and without exultation, Luther now resumed his place as the ruling spirit of the University and village. His word was law, and the stormy past seemed like a dream. He does not appear to have at once undertaken regular academic lectures, as that portion of his earlier labors was being well done by others. Before many months, however, we find him expounding whole books of the Bible to eager throngs of students.

The first practical questions demanding attention were those relating to the **public worship** of the congregations, particularly of the parish church, of which the Reformer was the pastor. Here he preached twice every Sunday, and as soon as practicable arranged for a daily devotional service, in which the chief place was assigned to a practical exposition of the Scriptures. He conducted also an early morning service in the Augustinian monastery every Sunday.

Disapproval of the reckless course of the late self-appointed leaders found positive expression in the **restoration** of nearly all the **customs** which had been violently abandoned. Luther insisted that scrupulous regard must in all cases be manifested for the prejudices of the unenlightened, and that no long-established ceremonies should be changed until the mass of the congregation had by faithful preaching been prepared to accept the advanced measures. Subordinating entirely his

own personal preferences, he restored the services of the **public mass**, retaining as harmless the name, which the extremists had rejected, and omitting only those portions which savored distinctly of idolatry and human presumption. The **pictures** which had escaped the iconoclastic storm were permitted to remain, with merely a warning from the pulpit and through published tracts against the abuses connected with them. The **Latin language** was again introduced in the familiar liturgical formularies. The **cup** was administered in the Lord's Supper only to those who desired it, and to such at special times, in order not to offend the consciences of those who clung to the old method. Even the **elevation of the host**, which had been so closely linked with the worship of the consecrated elements, was retained for several years as an expression of reverence and thankfulness. **Candles** and the ordinary clerical **vestments** found their place again as ancient customs. All these outward forms were regarded as matters of indifference, not worth contending about, to be regulated from time to time in accordance with the growing intelligence of the people.

The chief aim was to give prominence to the **proclamation of the pure Word** of God, and in the new order of worship which Luther himself prepared in 1523, he demanded a place for this in the very midst of the service, abbreviating and simplifying the latter, and providing for the gradual superseding of the Latin by appropriate forms in the national tongue.

Especially did Luther seek to encourage the participation of all the assembled people in the **services of praise**. He pleaded personally with those of his associates who were known to possess

poetical or musical talent to prepare suitable German hymns, based upon the Psalms, or other portions of the Scriptures. Failing to secure adequate response, he himself undertook the work, displaying a gift hitherto entirely unsuspected by himself or others. The martyrdom of two brave young confessors of the truth at Brussels, in the summer of 1523, impelled him to give utterance to his deep feeling in a stirring ode in commemoration of their fidelity, which was soon upon the lips of the multitude. Early in 1524 appeared at Wittenberg the first collection of evangelical hymns in the German language, there being but eight in all, five of which were from the pen of Luther. He composed and published twenty more within the same year, by which time the enthusiasm of others had been aroused to activity in this new field, and the foundations laid for the rich and matchless hymnology of the German Lutheran church. The labors of the Reformer in this direction culminated about 1527, in the preparation of his immortal battle hymn: "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott."

But the chief energies of the period now under review were devoted to the continuance of the translation of the Bible. The work done at the Wartburg was thoroughly revised, appearing in complete form in September, 1522. The more serious task of giving idiomatic expression to the rugged and often doubtful forms of the ancient Hebrew writers was courageously undertaken. Aurogallus, the new professor of Hebrew at the University, and Melancthon rendered constant and valuable assistance, especially in fixing the exact meaning of the original text, and in discovering the nearest equivalents in German for unusual terms, but the impress of the Reformer's

mind was upon every line of the completed work. As it left the press, appearing in sections during the years 1523-1524, it was from first to last **Luther's version** of the sacred volume. Though published without mention of the translator's name, the introductions to the separate books, the terse marginal notes, and the general preface exalting the Epistle to the Romans, with its doctrine of justification by faith, as the key to the whole Scriptures, left no doubt in any mind as to its source. No one stopped in that age to think of the excellence of the translation. It was **accepted by all classes**, save the pronounced papists, as the pure and simple Word of God rescued from the mass of human traditions by the fearless champion of the truth. Its condemnation by the authorities of the corrupt church but confirmed the conviction that the latter were deceivers who could not endure the light, and increased the popular demand for the work. It remains to-day, substantially unchanged. Not only has it been the channel through which the message of divine grace has reached the masses of the German nation; but it has given fixed literary form to the German language itself, which was at that time in a formative stage. The peasant's son, who felt his nationality tingling in every vein, who had absorbed the wisdom of the schools and sounded the depths of foreign tongues without surrendering his native power of forceful utterance, here voiced the highest truths in forms so natural that even his enemies could but accept them as final, and the theologian, seeking the eternal well-being of his countrymen, unwittingly became the literary dictator of the nation.

## CHAPTER IV.

### EXTENDING INFLUENCE.

THE consciousness of his high calling as the leader of a great movement embracing not Germany alone, but the entire Western Church, was now fully awakened in Luther, and his position as such was **recognized** even by his bitterest enemies. The zealous papist, King Ferdinand, who, in the absence of his brother, the Emperor, wielded the imperial sceptre, informed the latter in 1523 that scarcely one man in a thousand could be found in the realm who was not in some measure infected with the new heresy.

Luther fully **realized the responsibility** which thus rested upon him and earnestly sought to lay deep foundations for the future welfare of Church and State.

The question of the proper **training of the young** and the instruction of the ignorant masses in the rudiments of saving doctrine pressed heavily upon him. He had these classes mainly in view in his exposition of the Ten Commandments from the pulpit in 1516. With characteristic distrust of his own fitness for the undertaking, he now earnestly requested various friends to prepare for general use a series of simple questions and answers covering the chief articles of Christian faith. He at length secured the official appointment of Justus Jonas, the provost of the University, and his talented friend, Agricola, for the work of preparing upon this plan a "children's catechism," and eagerly awaited the result of their labors.



With the ignorant fanaticism which regards general education as hostile to piety, Luther had never the slightest sympathy. He bewailed the illiteracy of the masses. Already in 1520, in his *Address to the Nobility*, he had urged the necessity of the careful training of the young, and now that he found men decrying all education, and the town school of Wittenberg transformed into a bakery, he was filled with the deepest anxiety. Again and again he lifted up his voice in behalf of the neglected youth, and in 1524 published an earnest appeal "to all burgomasters and councilors in German lands," imploring them to establish **local schools** at the public expense. He argued that but a portion of the money once so freely squandered upon indulgences, masses and pilgrimages would suffice to ensure an adequate training of the rising generation, and maintained, with a convincing energy never since excelled, that the public safety was far more dependent upon the general intelligence than upon armaments or hoarded wealth. Nor were these appeals in vain. Pastor Bugenhagen re-opened the school at Wittenberg. Educational work was organized on a broad basis at Magdeburg, Nuremberg, and other influential centres under the direction of Luther and Melanchthon, the University of Wittenberg furnishing **enthusiastic teachers**. Luther himself in 1525 traveled to **Eisleben** to participate in the establishment of a school in the place of his birth, which was at once committed to the oversight of his friend, Agricola.

Full recognition was also given by the Reformer to the claims of **higher education**. He maintained the importance of the study of the ancient languages, not only because they are the sheath in which the keen blade of the Spirit is carried,

but for their broadening influence upon the mind. While denouncing philosophy as sheer folly, and human culture as vanity, when they attempt to usurp the place of religion, he regarded all science and art as natural allies, and urged their cultivation as tending to develop the powers which the Creator has wisely and graciously bestowed upon man.

Serious **financial questions** were involved in the great changes wrought by the new doctrines. What should be done with the abandoned monasteries and their valuable property? The large **endowments** for the support of public and private masses could in many places no longer be employed in accordance with the will of the testators. Many **bequests** to monasteries had been made by noble families, mainly as a provision for the support of their indigent members who, it was thought, would find in these institutions a secure home through life. Those who still cherished the expectation of a return to the old order of things protested against the employment of these funds in any other than a literal accordance with the terms upon which they had been given. But it soon became evident that such were but idle dreamers. The whole organization of society had been permanently changed, and some new disposition must be made of these now useless possessions.

No one realized the extent of these difficulties more keenly nor faced them more bravely than did Luther. He maintained, as a general principle, that **endowments** established for the support of unchristian methods of divine worship could now be rightly applied only for the furtherance of the same ultimate end by proper and Christian methods. Evangelical pastors, regularly-

called, were entitled to the income of parishes once under the jurisdiction of Romish priests, but could not demand this where the old order still prevailed. **Monasteries** should become schools for the common people, and their endowments might be employed for any of the legitimate purposes of education or religion. First of all, however, a suitable portion of the invested funds should be returned to the indigent heirs of those from whom the donations had originally come, since the support of these was a part of the design of the donors. Secondly, provision should be made for the maintenance of the aged inmates of the cloisters and of the poor and unfortunate in every community. Only when these primary demands of justice and charity should have been justly met might the claims of education and worship be asserted. The views of Luther upon these questions were widely influential, but seldom attained complete triumph over the schemes of grasping officials or the rude violence of an excited populace. He lamented : "The world must still be the world, and Satan its prince : I have done what I could."

In the midst of these general cares, Luther was constantly besieged by a multitude of **escaped monks and priests**, deposed for the expression of evangelical views. He felt a measure of personal responsibility for the helpless condition of such, welcomed them to his table, and spared no effort to secure for them opportunities of earning a livelihood. We still possess many letters written by him in the interest of such individuals to princes, pastors and the directors of manufacturing establishments throughout Germany. He was peculiarly interested in the case of **nine nuns** who at Easter, in 1523, after appealing in vain to their

relatives to secure their release from unwilling bondage, escaped by night from a convent at Nimptsch and came to Wittenberg. He publicly commended their courageous course, found temporary shelter for them, and was soon gratified in seeing them nearly all well and permanently provided for, several having been married to honorable and well-to-do citizens.

People in all manner of distress applied to him for aid. To some he secured the restoration of property wrongfully taken from them; others were by his intercession relieved from the payment of oppressive fines. Mothers appealed to him for counsel in regard to the marriage of their children, and young ladies enlisted him as an advocate in overcoming the opposition of relatives to their chosen suitors. He wrote many letters of consolation to the sick, the imprisoned and the bereaved, displaying the most delicate sympathy and always connecting his counsel intimately with some appropriate passage of the divine Word. These private letters not infrequently found their way quickly into print and carried comfort everywhere to the homes of the afflicted. They give us a profound insight into the Reformer's tenderly sensitive nature, and mark him as the most intensely human of all the world's great leaders, the Apostle Paul alone excepted.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE OLD ENEMY.

WHEN Luther had so heroically maintained his position at Worms, the breach with the Church of Rome was recognized on all hands as complete and final. On all essential points he had fortified his doctrinal position, and had no desire to renew discussion with his adversaries, who could but re-assert their views and cite in their support the utterances of fallible men and the notoriously unreliable deliverances of popes and councils. He sought now only the further development of the doctrines which he had found so unmistakably taught in the divine Word, and their application to the necessities of the awakening church life. True, his opinions of the iniquity of the papal hierarchy and the blasphemous character of its claims were but confirmed in the course of his studies, and he lost no suitable opportunity to give open utterance to his implacable hostility. But he sought not controversy. As his now exultant foes assailed him on every hand, he regarded their effusions with silent contempt, or turned them over for refutation to the hands of his followers. A few prominent assailants were, however, still granted the honor of a direct reply, lest the dignity of their names should give currency to their perverted views.

The University of Paris had long displayed a degree of independence in its relations to the papacy which led Luther and his associates to anticipate a favorable disposition upon its part

toward their efforts to emancipate the enslaved nations. At the time of the Leipzig Disputation, Luther had been willing to submit his views for critical examination to this unprejudiced and enlightened tribunal. The theologians of the institution then avoided an expression of their views, but had since practically ranged themselves upon the side of his enemies. Now, in April, 1521, they cast off all reserve, publishing a long list of citations from his writings, which they denounced as "poisonous, outrageous and pestilential heresies." As these learned men, however, contented themselves with denunciation, and did not undertake to refute any of the heretic's errors, the latter regarded their assault with unconcealed contempt. He allowed Melanchthon to reply in Latin, and then published a translation of both documents, preceded and followed by a few caustic comments of his own, pronouncing the faculty of Paris "full of the snow-white leprosy of antichristian heresy from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot." He shrewdly called public attention to the fact that, whereas his chief contention with the enemy had hitherto been upon the subject of papal supremacy, this valiant defender of the faith was entirely silent upon that point, thus practically conceding his position in the great controversy, and revealing the hollowness of the boasted unity of the Romish Church.

An annual bull had for a number of years been issued from Rome just before the Easter festival, entitled the **Bull of the Supper of the Lord**, embracing a list of all the damnable heresies which had prevailed in the Church. In the year 1521, the name of Luther appeared in this terrific document, following those of Wickliffe and Huss. Receiving a copy at the Wartburg, Luther pub-

lished, as a "New Year's Greeting" for the Pope, a rejoinder entitled: **The Bull of the Evening Gormandizing of our Most Holy Lord, the Pope**, quoting in the caption the words of the tenth Psalm: "His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud," and representing the great head of the Church, after a luxurious supper, opening his mouth in drunken frenzy to curse all the world in barbarous and incoherent Latin.

A new assailant appeared in the same year—no less a personage than **King Henry VIII.**, of England, who at this juncture had special reasons for cultivating the good will of the Pope. Laying aside the dignity becoming his station, and priding himself upon his rather meagre literary attainments, this monarch of a great nation, who during the session of the Diet at Worms had urged the Emperor to employ the severest measures for the suppression of the heretic, now condescends to a personal attack upon the poor monk in a foreign land. Professing to defend the Roman Catholic doctrines of the Lord's Supper, indulgences and the supremacy of the Pope against the strictures of Luther in his *Babylonian Captivity*, he denounces the Reformer in the coarsest and vilest terms. The work was dedicated to the Pope, and earned for its author the title, "Defender of the Faith," which is still proudly worn by the Protestant monarchs of England, not without some aversion, we may fancy, as they recall its rather dubious origin. A special Bull was issued from Rome, assuring to every one who should read this royal defence of the truth an **indulgence** releasing him from ten years' pain in purgatory, a favor, we may surmise, not so readily granted when, thirteen years later, this same king severed the English church from all allegiance to the papal throne.

To enable all Germans to secure the promised indulgence, the document was, by direction of Luther's inveterate enemy, Duke George of Saxony, translated into their language and widely scattered. It never, however, approached the circulation of the counter-publication of Luther, in which, after a patient re-statement and defence of the views assailed, the supreme importance of faith was strongly asserted, and full play then given to the Reformer's indignation and contempt, covering the royal antagonist with opprobrium. "These two," he declared, "Henry and the Pope, just suit together—two donkeys braying to one another." So terrible was the rebuke thus administered, that Luther's own friends were affrighted, and the astonished monarch complained bitterly to the German princes of the grievous injury he had received at the hands of the shameless monk.

A peculiar means of attack employed by a pamphleteer, *Cochlæus*, in 1523, deserves passing notice, as illustrating a characteristic of the age. The belief in the significance of portents, or any unusual appearance in the natural world, was almost universal. The publication referred to describes a calf, born at Freiburg, having a bald pate, a monk's cowl hanging about its neck, a mouth like a man's, and frequently gesticulating like a preacher in the pulpit. Of course this could only portend dire disaster to the land, indicating clearly enough the monk of Wittenberg as the cause of the coming calamities. Luther proved more than a match for his antagonists, however, even in the interpretation of such profound mysteries. He replied that the calf was a symbol of the absurdities of monasticism, found a counterpart of each deformity in some feature of the



effete system, and published his explanation with a striking picture of the famous beast and of an equally strange creature found dead in the Tiber a quarter of a century before—an ass, having some remarkable resemblances to the person of the Pope, the latter case being clearly described by the pen of Melanchthon. As may be imagined, this illustrated publication proved very popular, and passed through a number of editions.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FALTERING ALLIES.

WE have seen the sympathy of Luther with the Humanistic movement. Its leaders in Germany were among his early associates at the University, and with many of them he continued to maintain the friendliest relations. He shared their love of learning, and they sympathized with him in his free criticism of the blind dogmatism of the past.

But the Humanists, as a rule, were strangers to the moral earnestness of Luther. They were Epicureans in temper, if not in profession. They dreaded strife and were ready to make almost any sacrifice of their convictions if they might only pursue undisturbed their favorite studies. Not a few of them were, in the course of the conflict, drawn into full sympathy with the religious movement and became very valuable promoters of the Reformation. But the majority gradually withdrew their support from Luther, and either amused themselves by satirizing the contestants upon either side, or avoided the questions of dispute entirely. Luther spoke scornfully of the pusillanimous spirit of these enlightened men, but did not seriously grieve over their departure, as he had never fully trusted them. His deeply reverent nature had always been repelled by the trifling way in which they dealt with sacred themes.

More serious was the widening breach between himself and Erasmus, the acknowledged leader of the Humanists. The latter was a man of really extensive and accurate learning, a diligent

student, and the master of an elegant Latin diction. He had rendered permanent service by his investigations of ancient versions of the Scriptures and by the publication of a Greek New Testament. He had traveled widely, residing and teaching in London, Oxford, Cambridge, in France, Italy and Holland. He, and the great Hebrew scholar, Reuchlin, were called the "Eyes of Germany." By his keenly satirical writings against prevailing abuses, which were most widely circulated, he had prepared the minds of many among the educated classes for an open rupture with the church of Rome.

Luther entertained a high regard for the attainments of Erasmus, and the latter at first welcomed the bold utterances of the monk as tending to break the shackles of mediæval dogmatism. An **occasional correspondence** sprung up between the two men, initiated by Luther, who was very anxious to secure as far as possible the scholarship and influence of the celebrated scholar for the cause of the Gospel. As early as 1517, however, he expressed to his friends distrust of the moral sincerity of Erasmus, and he soon became convinced that no active support was to be expected from the sage of Rotterdam. In 1524, he addressed to him an exceedingly candid letter as a **last appeal**, begging him to confine himself to the sphere for which his talents so peculiarly fitted him, and not to yield his pen to the service of the enemy. But this plea came too late, if indeed its imperious tone did not, by wounding the pride of Erasmus, give additional energy to the assault which he was even then engaged in preparing. He had been urged by many to avenge the injured honor of England's king by entering the lists against Luther. This now appeared a perfectly safe and politic thing to do, as Erasmus had

finally concluded to cast in his lot with the papal party, and could of course promote his personal interests by aiding them in their desperate conflict with the invincible monk.

The **point of attack** was most skilfully chosen. Erasmus did not dare to expose himself to ridicule by rushing to the defence of the papal absurdities over which he had himself so often made merry. He must select some theme which would call for scholarly treatment and which had not been already discussed by men less celebrated than himself. Luther had very broadly denied the ability of man by his own strength to choose or to do that which is right. Erasmus, the self-reliant representative and exponent of the culture which man may attain by a proper discipline of his natural powers, would take up the cause of human ability. In September, 1524, appeared his book entitled: **Of the Free Will**. Luther at once recognized that he had here an antagonist more worthy of his steel than any who had yet assailed him. He declared openly that Erasmus was the first of all his enemies to touch the real heart of the controversy. All others had disputed about outward trifles, but here the **very citadel** of his teaching was assailed, and he rejoiced in the opportunity to write upon themes of real importance. Nevertheless, the arguments of Erasmus, though beautifully expressed, appeared to him surprisingly weak, and he did not hesitate to oppose to them a thorough statement of his own views in the treatise entitled: **Of the Enslaved Will**. This document contains the most unqualified assertions of man's utter helplessness and of the absolute sovereignty of God. The most extreme views of Augustine touching the eternal divine decrees are cordially endorsed, and the author is

at no pains to reconcile the frequent declaration, that "all things come to pass of necessity," with that conviction of free agency upon which rests the universal sense of personal responsibility.

In estimating the positions here assumed by Luther, it is important to remember that they are not the deductions of abstract reasoning, but were maintained so zealously as **seemingly essential** to the integrity of the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, *i. e.*, salvation by pure grace, without any admixture of human worthiness. This doctrine, he felt, must be defended at all hazards, however trying to the human reason may be the inferences required. It is very noticeable that in the later utterances of the Reformer the extreme statements here defended in the heat of controversy do not recur, although they were never formally recalled. Their assertion at this time, as in the equally strict statements found in the theological works of Melanchthon, did much to emphasize the line of demarcation between the shallow work-righteousness of the Romish church, and the humble yet confident dependence upon the free mercy of God which distinguished the genuine Reformers, and which has pervaded all Lutheran theology. The document is not lacking in the **personal invective** which enters so largely into all the controversial writings of the period, and which Luther felt to be the more needful the more exalted the reputation of those who dared to arise as the champions of error. To have spoken lightly now would have seemed to indicate fear of his illustrious antagonist or indifference to the labored attempt of the latter to lay a logical foundation for the religion of human merit. From this time onward, Erasmus is to be numbered among the open foes of the Reformation, though always

counseling moderation in the outward measures adopted for its suppression.

Luther was more deeply pained by the defection of his old friend, **Staupitz**, through whose wise counsels he had been so greatly aided in the days of his spiritual distress in the monastery. The latter, after following the fortunes of the Reformer for some years, though with faltering step, became alarmed by the increasing rancor of the strife and longing to end his days amid the peaceful activities of an established ecclesiastical order, had returned to the service of the papal church, becoming abbot of a cloister at Salzburg, and vicar to the cardinal-archbishop. Luther continued to maintain correspondence with this genial but faint-hearted man until the latter, disappointed and self-reproachful, was released from his trying position by death in December, 1524. Luther's sad comment was: "God has slain him," yet he always spoke of him with tenderest regard.

Luther was well aware that Staupitz was the representative of a large number of persons who, fully convinced of the righteousness of his cause and kindly inclined toward himself, were yet **shrinking back** into the camp of the enemy, frightened by the extent of the general upheaval of society and alienated, in part, by the seeming arrogance of his own bearing and the rude vigor of his speech. Yet he refused to moderate in the least the bluntness of his language, convinced that no smoother phraseology would suffice to arrest the insolence of the unscrupulous defenders of the apostate church nor to arouse timid believers to open and uncompromising resistance. Others might flinch before the foe; he must but stand the more firmly, and, though he stand alone, hurl defiance into the face of every champion of error.

## CHAPTER VII.

### RAGING PEASANTS.

VIGOROUS as were the protests of Luther against prevailing errors, he always consistently maintained that no sword but that of the Spirit must be used in defence of the truth. Abuses and injuries must be endured in Christian meekness until they can be remedied by lawful means. **Obedience to the powers that be**, he urged as a primary duty of every Christian citizen. When, in his *Address to the Nobility*, he so fervently appeals to his countrymen to throw off the yoke of foreign oppressors, he always has distinctly in view an orderly resistance conducted by the lawful leaders of the nation. But not all the agitators of the day were thus conscientious, and the patient peasantry of Germany had already a hundred years before given evidence that their wrath, when fully aroused, could brook no resistance. The grievances were manifold, and mainly of a political nature. The ancient **feudal system**, still in part maintained, involved the abject subjection of the common man to his liege-lord and the support of a large body of petty nobility. The **imperial taxes** were unscrupulously levied. The **Church** was never done with its exactions, and maintained its sway over the superstitious masses by calling to its constant aid the shadowy forms of departed saints, and painting in lurid colors the pangs of purgatory and perdition.

When Luther now snatched the keys of heaven and hell from the hands of sordid ecclesiastics and

proclaimed that a Christian man is by virtue of his faith a free lord over all things, multitudes who had no spiritual aspirations caught up the cry of liberty, and, ignoring the careful counter-statement, that the same Christian man is by virtue of his love a ministering servant of all, demanded in the name of the Reformer the demolition of the whole social fabric. **Carlstadt**, vanquished at Wittenberg, found admittance to a pulpit in the neighboring town of Orlamund, and began anew the proclamation of his revolutionary principles. Expelled from Saxon territory, he traveled through Southern Germany, gaining followers in many of the larger cities. He assailed the Church and her outward ordinances, holding that true religion consists in a withdrawal of the soul within itself, a losing of one's self in dreamy listlessness, thus appealing to the deep mystical tendency which is so marked a trait of the German national character. Yet with all this lauded and unworldly quietude he combined a spirit of reckless violence, maintaining that the existing laws must be ignored and the ancient Mosaic law be rigidly enforced. Meanwhile **Thomas Münzer**, having been expelled from Zwickau early in 1521, had been diligently spreading his fanatical ideas and gaining a large following. In 1523, he settled at Alstedt in Thuringia and, still later, in the imperial city of Mühlhausen. He and his associates claimed to be "overshadowed" by the Holy Spirit, to receive frequent direct revelations from God in dreams, and, in obedience to these, they proceeded to bind the "elect" everywhere in solemn league, not only for the overthrow of all existing authority, but for the actual extermination of all the ungodly, *i. e.*, all who should not swear allegiance to their new spiritual kingdom.



The ease with which such blindly fanatical notions were propagated is one of the most impressive evidences of the dense ignorance and superstition of the masses. A faithless Church had been for centuries sowing to the wind, and must now reap the whirlwind.

None so clearly saw the terrible nature of the gathering storm as Luther. Boldly he traversed the disaffected regions, urging the duty of submission to lawful authority. At Orlamund the excited multitude greeted him with jeers and curses. Carlstadt and Münzer, as champions of the people, assailed him in more bitter terms than had ever been employed by his papal antagonists, and their malignant tracts were eagerly read by the excited multitude. Luther met them with all his accustomed vigor in his lengthy treatise: "**Against the Heavenly Prophets.**"

Early in 1525, the peasants gathered in angry mobs in Swabia and Franconia and other regions where Münzer had prepared the way. The burghers of the large cities, oppressed by the grasping merchants, and jealous of the power of the princes, made common cause with them. Their demands were formulated in **Twelve Articles**, which became the standard around which all the discontented elements in the land were soon rallying. These articles prominently demanded unrestricted liberty in the preaching of the Gospel, and the right of every congregation to elect its own pastor. Only under cover of these Christian propositions, learned from Luther, appear the socialistic and revolutionary principles which were the real motives of the uprising. Mingled with the fanatical ideas were found, however, various suggestions of economic reform which met the approval of Luther, and which a later age has embodied in the statu-

tory laws of Germany. Luther at once prepared a response to this public document, expressing his judgment without fear or favor. He pronounces the disorderly assemblages of the peasants as acts of open and ungodly insurrection, but lays the chief blame upon the merciless exactions of the rulers, whom he faithfully warns against continuing thus to invite the terrible visitations of divine wrath. Then, turning to the peasants, he pleads with them to pursue only orderly methods for the redress of their grievances.

But all pleading was in vain. The multitudes continued to flock together throughout southern and central Germany, burning and pillaging on every hand. Münzer's visions became rapturous. It was revealed to him that victory was just at hand and that the whole order of the world was to be changed. The princes hesitated. Should they venture to meet violence with force? Were they able to quell this almost universal uprising? Then was heard a commanding voice above the din. Although the peasants sang and prayed and professed to be contending for the defence of the Gospel, they had become robbers and murderers, and must be subdued at all hazards. Luther called upon the princes, regardless of their religious differences, on the basis of the secular calling which had been bestowed upon them, to draw the sword and smite the rebels to right and left without mercy. To preserve the peace and quell disorder he pronounced the first duty of the civil ruler.

At length the princes assumed the offensive. Philip of Hesse, after quelling the outbreak in his own dominions, joined his forces with those of his father-in-law, Duke George of Saxony, Duke Henry of Brunswick and the Count of Mansfeld,

and the united army was soon face to face with a band of 8000 peasants entrenched behind a line of farm wagons at Frankenhäusen. Efforts at conciliation were made with prospects of success by the representative of the new elector, John of Saxony, and by Luther's personal friend, the Count of Mansfeld, when the arrival of Münzer from Mühlhausen awakened anew the frenzy of the multitude. On May 15th, the assault was made; the insurgents met it only with the singing of a hymn to the Holy Ghost, then fled in panic, Münzer himself being taken captive. The Elector John, having quieted the disorder in his own domain without bloodshed, now arrived from the south. On May 25th, Mühlhausen surrendered, and Münzer, after abject confession of his errors, was, with other ringleaders, executed upon the field. From camp to camp marched the victorious troops. Similar scenes were enacted in other portions of the land, and in a few weeks the insurrection was at an end. Fearful was the vengeance of the princes, multitudes of helpless prisoners being ruthlessly slain, against the earnest protest of Luther. It was estimated that the movement cost the lives of at least 100,000 of the infatuated peasants, while many of the fairest portions of Germany had been devastated.

The results of the insurrection were far-reaching for the cause of the Reformation and in their influence upon the personal career of Luther. The fear of an uprising of the common people had for years restrained the Roman Catholic prelates and princes from violent measures; but now, flushed with victory and charging the disturbance itself to the teachings of Luther, they were eager to crush out the last vestige of the Evangelical party. The Pope sent his congratulations

to Philip of Hesse upon the noble stand which he had taken against the "ungodly Lutherans." On July 19th, 1525, a league was formed at Dessau between the princes, George of Saxony, Joachim of Brandenburg, Albert of Mayence, and the Dukes of Brunswick for mutual defence and for the extermination of the "accursed Lutheran sect."

Meanwhile, the **personal influence of Luther** had been neutralized in many quarters. Not a few of his warmest adherents were alienated by his advocacy of the use of the sword, failing to comprehend his doctrine of the divine right of civil rulers. He was charged with deserting the cause of the poor and the oppressed in the hour of their sorest need in order to gain the favor of the ruling classes. Those who had been won by his fearless denunciations of oppression, but who did not sympathize with his religious views, now lost all interest in the cause of the Reformation.

From this time onward, Luther **ceased to be the popular hero** of the German nation. Even his life was frequently threatened by those who had once idolized his name. He had stirred up in turn priests, princes and peasants to bitterest enmity, and all the good that he had accomplished seemed to be forgotten. Doctrinal disputes had meanwhile hopelessly divided the Evangelical party, and the socialistic agitation had left Wittenberg almost deserted. The Elector Frederick, faithful friend and protector, died on May 5th, and was buried in the castle-church amid the lamentations of the multitude, the funeral services being conducted by Luther and Melancthon.

Again the Reformer seemed to stand alone.

He had faced the fury of fanaticism as fearlessly as he had once braved the thunders of the papacy—had smitten wrong on every hand until the whole world seemed arrayed against him. It was the **darkest hour** in the history of Luther.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOLY BONDS.

NEVER was the dauntless spirit of the Reformer more clearly manifested than in these days of universal gloom. With dangers thickening on every side, he wrote to a friend on May 4th: "To spite the devil, I mean to take my Katie to wife before I die. They shall, at all events, not rob me of my courage and good cheer." Even this most personal step could not be taken without direct reference to the reformatory work to whose advancement all else in Luther's life was held subordinate.

He had for several years distinctly maintained **liberty of marriage** for the priesthood. He had encouraged many of his friends to avail themselves of this liberty, but at the same time wondered at their temerity in assuming the responsibility of the married state in such troublous times. His conception of the cares and burdens incident to wedded life was such as almost to overshadow its advantages. When extremists at Wittenberg pronounced marriage a duty, he exclaimed in indignation: "They shall never force a woman upon me." To the kind inquiry of a friend in November, 1524, he replied that, though he was neither wood nor stone, and his heart was in the hand of the Lord, yet he had no thought of marrying and should not do so unless his feeling in the matter should be entirely changed.

But when friend after friend assumed the sacred bonds, and he was permitted as a guest to share

the warmth and brightness of their happy homes, in such striking contrast with his own gloomy quarters; when enemies taunted him publicly with cowardice in shrinking from a course to which he had urged so many others; and when he learned through the medium of trusted friends that Catharine von Bora, one of the escaped nuns of the Nimptsch convent, for whom he had made fruitless efforts to secure a husband, would probably be willing to share the trials of his own lonely lot—his **resolution wavered**. Mysterious hints and playful banter began to creep into his private correspondence, and, with characteristic hardihood, just when his friends were all trembling in terror and his foes most jubilant, he startled the world with the sudden news: "The monk of Wittenberg has married a nun!"

The simple **marriage rites** were performed in the monastery in the presence of Bugenhagen, the pastor of the parish church, Justus Jonas, the provost of the University, a lawyer named Apel, and the painter, Lucas Cranach, with his wife, on the evening of June 13th. The **marriage festivities** to which a larger number of friends, including the parents of Luther, were invited, were held two weeks later. Venison for this occasion was furnished by the Elector; the town council sent a keg of Eimbeck beer and twenty guldens; the University presented a silver cup plated with gold, and the guests brought appropriate wedding-gifts.

The **public announcement** of the event for the time being overshadowed all other topics of conversation. Enemies, including Erasmus, attributed Luther's whole course of opposition to the Romish church to his passionate fretting under the restraints of celibacy and his **admira-**

tion for the "beautiful nun" (a designation which her best friends could scarcely have claimed for Catharine), while his friends almost without exception lamented the step as lowering the dignity of the great leader. Those least disposed to criticize were heard to say: "If it only had not happened just now, or if he had chosen some other than a nun!" Melancthon thought his friend heartless to indulge in wedding festivities when the whole land was in mourning. But Luther was undisturbed. He had the approval of his conscience, his father and his God, and had been enabled to strike another sturdy blow at the foundations of the perverted system of the papacy.

The married life of Luther proved a happy one. He entertained a cordial respect for his self-reliant and capable companion, whom he playfully called his "Lord Katie," and to whom he committed the unreserved charge of the domestic economy. Nor was it a slight undertaking for this maiden of six and twenty years to enter into life-partnership with so famous a man, her senior by sixteen years, accustomed from early youth to masculine society alone, and confirmed in his habits of life by the long discipline of a monastery. But Catharine possessed a dauntless spirit. Her capacity for the discharge of household duties had been displayed in the home of the city clerk, Reichenbach. Her attractive personality had secured her marked favors at the hand of Christian, the exiled king of Denmark, and she had always been perfectly at ease in the presence of the learned men who gathered at Wittenberg. She had discovered, too, what a warm heart beat beneath the stern exterior of the Reformer, and she had never, like her associates, felt overawed in his presence. He, upon his part, repelled at



first by her dignity, which he attributed to pride, seems to have been won at length by her decision and candor. If she did not enter very heartily into the theological discussions of the day, she yet knew that Luther was always right, and she entertained a hearty aversion to the tyranny of that church which had imprisoned her for ten years within the dingy walls of a convent. Her highest ambition now was to prove herself a real helpmeet to her overburdened husband.

It was no luxuriously-furnished home to which the bride was led. For some months Luther's only associates had been his cloister-brother, Jacob Praepositus, and a little dog. For more than a year no one had made the Reformer's bed. There were still dust-covered dishes in the closets, and here and there some pieces of modest furniture which the departing monks had been unable to carry with them. Order and comfort now quickly sprung into being at the magic touch of a woman's hand, and a tone of renewed hopefulness soon became noticeable in the Reformer's bearing, alternating, however, with periods of depression and anticipations of approaching death. He himself found it difficult to realize that he was actually a married man, a fact of which Katie was not slow to remind him from time to time. His work went on without interruption.

## CHAPTER IX.

### RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH.

LUTHER's plan of patient toleration in matters of external form had now been pursued for several years. Under the faithful preaching of the Gospel and the bold denunciation of papal abuses, the great body of the people at Wittenberg and in many other centres of influence had gradually lost interest in the old forms and learned to think of the Church as independent of the Roman hierarchy. Released from their ancient bondage, they were scattered as **sheep without a shepherd**.

It was evident that the time had come for a **re-organization** upon the basis of evangelical principles. Arrangement must be made for the supply of capable ministers and for their adequate support. There must also be some bond of union between the scattered congregations, and some means of awakening renewed interest in localities where the populace had long been indifferent to all religious life.

The **task** was a **stupendous** one. Luther shrunk from it, not only because he himself had little talent for organization, but because he feared that the new life of the Church might be again stifled under a system of outward laws and regulations. He desired to allow in external things the largest liberty consistent with order and efficient oversight. In his own home, Saxony, any movement in this direction was hindered by the extremely conservative spirit of the aged Elector, who pleaded that no unnecessary inno-

vations should be made in worship or the government of the congregations until the voice of the Church at large could be heard through a general council. While in the parish church at Wittenberg, under the immediate direction of Luther, the **services were gradually divested** of all objectionable features, the castle church continued to observe all the ancient ceremonies. Nearly a thousand masses for souls were annually celebrated, and 35,000 pounds of wax were burned each year in honor of departed saints. Luther could, at length, no longer endure this inconsistency, and, regardless of the displeasure of the Elector, he denounced from the pulpit the idolatry thus encouraged in his prince's church. After an entire year of ceaseless and determined agitation, the authorities of the church yielded to the force of public opinion, and at Christmas, 1524, the **masses were abandoned**. With this concession Luther was satisfied for the time being, although in all other points the ancient Romish customs were continued.

Upon the death of the beloved Elector, Frederick the Wise, the accession of his more positive and aggressive brother, John the Steadfast, opened the way for **more efficient measures** of reform, and, despite the terrors of the Peasant War, then just inaugurated, and the important changes in Luther's private life, the latter was not slow to improve the providential opportunity. Already on the 20th of May he sent to the camp of the new Elector before Mühlhausen, a plan for the re-organization of the University, which at once received cordial endorsement. The popish ceremonies at the castle church were now at once abandoned, and special instructions issued to pastors throughout Saxony to preach only the

pure Gospel and to administer the sacraments in the form in which Christ had instituted them.

On October 20th, a **new order of worship**, prepared by Luther and approved by the Elector, was introduced into the parish church at Wittenberg. It was adapted particularly to the existing circumstances of the congregation, and Luther did not regard it as a final, fixed form, nor did he desire that "any better orders" in use elsewhere should be displaced by it. The use of vestments, candles, etc., was to be continued "as long as they last, or until we choose to alter them." He recommended that, for the sake of good order, only one form of service should be employed in each city or principality. His own formula was widely distributed and adopted, with greater or less variation, in many other places. It was, however, in direct contravention of his own desire, when, in the Lenten season of 1526, an electoral mandate required the introduction of the latter throughout the realm. In Southern Germany, the necessities of the case had already led to the adoption of **various forms of worship**, which were commonly simpler and prepared with less regard to traditional customs. However diversified these new orders, they were all distinctly evangelical in character, and their employment indicated a **final separation** from the Romish church.

But Luther felt that far **more essential matters** than these demanded attention. Most important of all was the **proper instruction** of the people, and especially the training of the young. To this end, he had already furnished valuable contributions in various publications which afterwards formed the basis of his catechisms. It was now felt that there should be some system of regular oversight. The bishops had long neglected

their duties, and the masses of the people were sunken in almost incredible ignorance. Luther had himself, in 1524, visited a number of communities and learned from his own observation how sore was the need of spiritual training. He now called upon the Elector and princes of the realm to act as "emergency bishops" in establishing pastoral districts, appointing ministers, and organizing schools, basing their right to act in such matters, not upon their secular offices, but upon their position as the most influential among the general congregation of believers. When the princes refused to undertake such work, he urged congregations to select from their own number competent men and solemnly set these apart as pastors to administer the Word and sacraments. In some cases, the councils of cities in which evangelical views were in the ascendancy assumed the authority of calling ministers. Luther approved of all these methods, well content when in any orderly way the Gospel was permitted to have free course among the people. He as little thought of demanding uniformity in church organization as in liturgical formulas.

In Saxony, the cordial sympathy of the court opened to the Reformers a wide field of usefulness. Committees of visitation were appointed, embracing theologians and laymen, Luther and Melancthon themselves accepting their share of the active work. The formal visitation, beginning in 1527, revealed a state of spiritual destitution far beyond all anticipations. Ignorant tradesmen who had for years been acting as Romish priests, falling in with the popular current, had professed adherence to the Gospel, but were unable to preach—in some cases, could not even read. The rude peasants had in many places lost all regard for re-

ligion, and were so utterly abandoned to vice that the visitors despaired of effecting their reformation and directed their own efforts almost entirely to the rescuing of the children.

Many practical difficulties were encountered. The peasants, freed from the exactions of the bishops, were unwilling to make any free-will offerings for the support of an evangelical ministry, and the property of the monasteries had been already in great part appropriated by the secular princes. The local nobility, many of whom still held allegiance to the Romish church, claimed the right of appointing the parish priests, or pastors. Melancthon, almost in despair at the prevailing disorder, was at times ready to compromise with the bishops, allowing the re-instatement of the ancient ceremonies and of the episcopal authority, if but the free preaching of the Gospel should be conceded. The Instructions for Church Visitors, prepared by him, was made the basis of a more general and thorough prosecution of the work in the following year. The organizing talent of Bugenhagen, the pastor at Wittenberg, rendered invaluable service, as also the counsels of the practical Hausman, under whose able ministry almost the entire population of Zwickau had been won to the side of the Reformation. Similar efforts in other portions of Germany were influenced more or less directly by the principles announced in Saxony, and thus the evangelical movement gradually assumed something like a definite and permanent form, by its inherent power superseding the everywhere discredited jurisdiction of the Romish bishops. When, in 1529, the catechisms of Luther appeared, they found a cordial reception and formed an indissoluble bond of spiritual unity between the

scattered congregations throughout Germany. In our own day, the Church Visitations of Saxony from 1524 to 1529, with all the anxiety and uncongenial toil which they involved upon the part of many noble men, are remembered chiefly as having given occasion for the preparation of this little volume, which has done more than all other writings of the Reformer to give unity of faith to the great and growing communion which yet bears his name. The fact is a most impressive illustration of the principle, that not organization, but clear statement of the truth, is the surest basis of abiding power.

## CHAPTER X.

### POLITICAL EVENTS.

How was it possible for these bold measures of reform to be prosecuted in a land governed by a Roman Catholic Emperor and the Pope? The question requires us to glance at the course of political events.

Upon the death of Leo X., in December, 1521, the papal dignity was conferred upon Adrian, who, having been the religious instructor of the Emperor, might be expected to find in the latter a willing tool in the enforcement of extreme measures against the new heresy. The legate of the new Pope, appearing at the Diet of Nuremberg in 1522, demanded the strict enforcement of the Edict of Worms, denouncing Luther as worse than Mohammed. He urged the immediate arrest of the beloved pastor, Osiander, and the other evangelical preachers of Nuremberg. The bold denunciation of this proposition by the enraged citizens and their determination to protect their pastors at all hazards revealed to the assembled princes the temper of the people at large, and the affrighted legate, laying aside his haughty air, began to pose as a "martyr" in the midst of a persecuting rabble. Although the majority of the Diet were zealous adherents of the established order, they "feared the people" and had, moreover, various grievances of their own which they were anxious to have publicly discussed. They therefore finally agreed that the Lutheran errors could be exterminated only by a



**general council held on German soil, in which every one should be enjoined to speak out what he believed to be "divine and Gospel truth."** This official declaration, made within eighteen months after the condemnation at Worms, was a notable testimony to the progress of Luther's cause.

When the Diet re-assembled at Nuremberg, in 1524, the evangelical preachers of the city had become bolder, and administered the communion in both elements to thousands of persons, conspicuous among the throng being the Queen of Denmark, a sister of the Emperor and Ferdinand. The Pope, through his legate, again demanded the execution of the Edict of Worms, but was obliged to be content with the assurance that it should be executed "as far as possible." Arrangements were then boldly made for a "general assembly of the German nation," to be held at Spires in the autumn of the same year. This compromise satisfied no one. Luther at once published the edict with annotations, denouncing in scathing terms the inconsistency of first sanctioning his condemnation and then arranging for an examination of his teachings. The Pope bitterly complained of the presumption of the Germans in calling a council without his advice, while the Emperor declared the edict void and prohibited the proposed gathering. Thus perished the last hope of the peaceful organization of Germany as a political power.

In July, 1524, under the leadership of the papal legate, Campeggio, a partisan league of Catholic princes was formed at Ratisbon, in which the confederates resolved that not the slightest deviation from the prescribed order of worship should be tolerated in their domains, and

pledged their united efforts for the utter extinction of the Lutheran heresy. Both Pope and Emperor cordially approved this action, which must of course compel the organization of the evangelical princes in self-defence.

Philip, the energetic young Margrave of Hesse, having been won for the cause of the Reformation largely through a conversation with Melancthon at an accidental meeting upon a journey, formed an alliance with the Elector of Saxony at Gotha in February, 1525, which was joined by other princes at Magdeburg in the following June, and became the basis of a formal league of all the **Evangelical Estates**, including the large cities, concluded at **Torgau** in February, 1526.

Thus, by the action of the papal party, the nation had been divided into two distinctly hostile camps when the Diet assembled at **Spire** in **June, 1526**. It was now no longer Luther who was to be subdued, but a valiant band of princes, supported by the foremost cities of the realm, and resolved under no circumstances to surrender their Gospel liberty and bow their necks again beneath the yoke of papal bondage. The church question took precedence of all others. It appeared, for a time, as though an understanding might be reached by which both parties should be tolerated until the summoning of the general council which the Pope and Emperor had so often agreed to call. Just upon the eve of the adoption of such an agreement, the presiding officer, **Ferdinand**, produced an imperial letter of instructions, bearing date of **March 27th**, which strictly forbade any action in regard to the **Edict of Worms** or any decision of pending church questions. This was rightly interpreted as indicating the purpose of the Emperor to enforce the long-despised edict

without further parley; but the princes shrewdly suspected that the course of more recent events might have already weakened the imperial resolution. The letter was written, they observed, under the stimulus of the Peace of Madrid, when the King of France was a prisoner in the hands of the Emperor, and the latter was upon cordial terms with the Pope. Since then, the wheel of political fortune had reversed the situation. The released King of France and the Pope were now in league against the Emperor, who might urgently need the good-will of all his German subjects. It was therefore formally decreed that, until the calling of the council, every one should "so act in matters relating to the Edict of Worms as to be able to render an account to God and the Emperor." As anticipated, the Emperor was too largely occupied with his wider political complications to assert his power in Germany, and for the next three years the work of instruction and organization proceeded unhindered under the protection of the broad **Edict of Toleration**.

Meanwhile, the drift of public sentiment was steadily in the direction of evangelical liberty, and the hearts of the Reformers were cheered by many notable advances. **Albert of Brandenburg**, the Grand Master of the famous German Order, under the advice of Luther, transformed his dominions into a secular duchy, severed all relations with the papacy, and made provision for the regular preaching of the pure Gospel, thus laying the foundation of the powerful Protestant state of Prussia. One by one, the **cities of Lower Germany** fell into line, and their church life was organized in many cases by personal friends of Luther, while the hymns of the latter on the lips of the people bore down before them all opposition.

## CHAPTER XL.

### PERSONAL AFFLICTIONS.

THE years 1526 and 1527 cover a period of peculiar trial for the Reformer. He suffered from a number of **physical ailments**, some of which were accompanied with excruciating pain, others with fulness and ringing sounds in the head, tightness upon the chest and fainting. These attacks now became more frequent and serious, being usually preceded by seasons of great spiritual depression, which he himself regarded as direct assaults of the devil, and in which he declared that he experienced the very tortures of hell. At such times, he would summon his friends to comfort him, and receive absolution at the hands of his pastor. With the actual outbreak of the physical symptoms, his inward agony gave place to calm and triumphant faith.

In July, 1527, after a severe attack of his malady, he felt convinced that his end was at hand. To his friends he then expressed himself as **ready to obey the Master's summons**, although he would gladly remain to help them fight the Lord's battles against the Fanatics. He acknowledged that he had often written harshly, but insisted that he had done so only to terrify the blasphemers. "God knows," he declared, "that I have wished harm to no one." More trying still to his earnest spirit was the weakness which ensued, incapacitating him for reading or writing, and compelling him to lose many precious hours.

At just about this time, also, the pestilence

broke out at Wittenberg. The University was removed to Jena, and Luther was urged to accompany his associates. As pastor of the parish church, however, he felt bound to remain, and, despite his own weakness, he was, with Bugenhagen, the associate pastor of the village, unremitting in his attentions to the sick. The wife of the burgomaster died almost in his arms. Two women in his own home fell sick with the disease. His wife was helpless, and the care of their infant son, Hans, occasioned the greatest anxiety. The birth of a daughter (Elizabeth), while welcomed with delight as a ray of sunshine amid the darkness, did not lighten the burden of responsibility resting upon the isolated household. "Conflict without and terrors at home, thus does Christ try us," he exclaimed, "but one comfort remains, with which we can oppose the raging Satan—we have the Word for the salvation of the souls of them that believe, even though he devours their bodies." Under these circumstances, he rejoiced greatly when Bugenhagen, whose house had become infected, moved with his family into the monastery. Several children, also, whose parents had fallen victims to the scourge, here found a refuge.

It appears to have been amid these trying scenes that the indomitable faith of Luther inspired the noblest of his poetic productions, the great **Battle-hymn of the Reformation**: "A Mighty Fortress is our God." Although based upon Psalm xlvii, it is by no means a mere reproduction of the inspired original, but rather a spontaneous outburst of the deepest feelings of Luther himself, like him in its rugged simplicity of diction—like him in its bold defiance of all the powers of evil and in its joyous confidence in the final victory of the "Lord God of Hosts."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE SACRAMENTAL CONTROVERSY.

SCARCELY had the Reformation begun to assert its power as a great popular movement, when there arose a controversy in the ranks of its adherents which diverted the attention of many from the great fundamental questions at issue and wrought untold injury to the cause. Strangely enough, the **Holy Supper**, instituted by our Lord as a bond of union among believers, became the occasion of dissensions which alienated the leaders of the evangelical movement in that day and have ever since divided the great Protestant host. This sad fact can be understood only in the light of preceding history.

The Roman Catholic Church had taught the **doctrine of transubstantiation**, that is, that in the act of consecration by the priest the bread used in the Lord's Supper is transformed into the veritable flesh of the Saviour's body, and the wine into His blood. The sacred wafer, or "host," was then "elevated" for adoration and offered to God anew in sacrifice by the priest. This "**sacrifice of the mass**" was supposed to be especially acceptable to God, securing from Him remission of sins for those in whose behalf the sacrifice was made. The celebration of the Lord's Supper thus became a "good work," or means of gaining the divine favor. It did not require the participation, nor even the presence, of the persons to be benefited. The agency of the priest alone was necessary, and this could be se-

cured—for the living or for the dead, for a term of years or “in perpetuo”—by the donation of money to the coffers of the Church. In connection with every cathedral or monastery there were shrines at which private masses were said, and the endowment of these was a fruitful source of the Church’s revenue.

In this “idolatry of the mass” was concentrated the whole perverted development of the papal church. Here was the **citadel of the enemy**—the stronghold of the system of salvation by works. If salvation by faith was to be maintained, the Reformers must present some radically different view of the Lord’s Supper. They are not responsible, therefore, for making the sacred ordinance a subject of strife. It had been bound in a worse than “Babylonian captivity,” and they were compelled to address themselves to the task of freeing it from its fetters of human tradition.

Beneath the flagrant error and abuse lay, however, a **great truth**, i. e., the presence of the Lord Himself in the Holy Supper. How was this presence to be conceived?

Luther at first accepted without questioning the traditional theory of transubstantiation. He very soon, however, following a hint received from the writings of D’Ailly, realized that there is no necessity for imagining a miraculous transformation of the elements, nor for discrediting the testimony of our own senses, which so clearly attest that the bread and wine remain unchanged. The Lord’s body is a spiritual body, and could be present just as well unseen **with the earthly elements** as He can be present everywhere when and as He will. This conception seemed to Luther to meet all the requirements of the scriptural language

concerning the ordinance, and, at the same time, to explain the importance attached to it by the Saviour and its acknowledged power to comfort and strengthen the humble communicant. From this simple conception he never afterwards wavered. To maintain it intact was his sole object in the wearisome controversies which ensued.

But this explanation of the sacred ordinance, so satisfying to the child-like faith and deep mystical nature of Luther, was not to stand unchallenged. Already in the summer of 1522, a letter was addressed to Luther by a theologian of Holland, named **Honius**, arguing that the words used by Christ in instituting the Supper are to be interpreted figuratively and do not at all imply His bodily presence. The views of the **Bohemian Brethren** were also called to his attention as lacking in clearness and strongly inclining to a rejection of important aspects of this doctrine. **Carlstadt** and his fanatical associates went much farther. When not despising the sacrament altogether, they regarded it as simply a memorial meal, whose chief advantage lay in the **rapt contemplation of Christ** upon the part of the recipient. To some, it was merely an opportunity for a renewal of their profession of faith, or a badge of loyalty. To the most radical, it was a mere ceremony, utterly needless in the case of those who had attained to real spiritual life, and who could commune with God directly without the intervention of any outward means.

Against these views, Luther maintained that God deals with us only through special external means of His own appointment; that the Lord's Supper is a transaction in which God bestows a gift and man is merely the recipient; that the gift bestowed is the forgiveness of sins and a share in



the fellowship of Christ and His saints; that the body of Christ is truly given as a seal and pledge of the imparted spiritual blessing. He would have men "directly and implicitly believe that in the sacrament of the altar the body and blood of Christ are truly present, and that we should not inquire further how or in what form they are present, since Christ has not told us especially anything about that." Had this counsel been generally heeded, what interminable controversies would have been avoided, and how different would have been the history of the Protestant church!

But when **Carlstadt** began to publish flippant misinterpretations of the words of institution, to ridicule the consecration of the elements, and deny that the celebration of the Supper had any relation to the forgiveness of sins, the indignation of Luther was stirred, and he denounced in vigorous terms the ignorant horde who, in their blind zeal, sought to exclude the Lord from His own ordinance.

In the year 1524, word was brought to Luther that **Zwingli**, the Swiss Reformer, had adopted Carlstadt's view. About the same time, **Æcolampadius**, a former pupil and warm friend of Luther, now preaching in Strassburg, and **Martin Bucer**, also a firm friend of the Reformation, announced that they no longer believed in the bodily presence of the Lord in the Holy Supper. They quoted against it irrelevant passages, such as "the flesh profiteth nothing," and argued that the body of Christ could not be in so many places at one time, nor could it be anywhere on earth, since it has ascended visibly to Heaven.

These scholarly assaults compelled Luther to undertake an **exhaustive study** of the subject. With keenest logic, he sought to meet every criti-

cism and carefully developed his own view. He endeavored to show how Christ's body could, by sharing in the attributes of the divine nature, be present in heaven and also, at the same time, at many places upon earth, and stoutly maintained that, whether his particular theory be accepted or not, all Christians are by the simple language of Christ bound to recognize that, in some way, His body is present and distributed wherever the sacrament is properly administered. His interest deepened as the strife proceeded, and he became thoroughly convinced that the views of his opponents sprang from an exaltation of reason above the simple divine Word, and that they were in conflict with the fundamental doctrine of the inseparable union of the human and divine natures in the person of Christ.

He was the **more ready to condemn** the views of his distinguished antagonists since he had previously met them, supported largely by the very same arguments, in connection with the fanatical vagaries of Carlstadt and Münzer. He regarded the entire movement as essentially one—a fresh outbreak of the very tendencies which he had so earnestly combated in the Roman Catholic church, transforming an ordinance of God's free grace into a work of human merit: The sacrament of the Lord's Supper seemed to him, as before, the point upon which all the new forms of error converged, and he boldly met the issue by **planting himself firmly** here, and treating all who varied essentially from what he conceived to be the scriptural basis of this doctrine as alike the enemies of Christ and of His church.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### LUTHER AND ZWINGLI.

SIDE by side with the advance of evangelical principles in Germany was progressing during these years a great reformatory movement in Switzerland, under the leadership of **Ulrich Zwingli**. The latter was a man in temperament and training the very opposite of Luther. His parents were in comfortable circumstances, and he enjoyed the benefits of a thorough classical training at Basel, Berne and Vienna. Having completed his theological course, he at the age of twenty-two became pastor at **Glarus**, in Switzerland, where he diligently prosecuted his studies in the Scriptures. He took an active part in public affairs and twice accompanied the men of his village upon military campaigns. The experience thus gained led him to protest with patriotic ardor against the mercenary employment of his countrymen in the service of foreign princes, a custom which, mainly through his influence, was abolished in the canton of Zurich. In 1516, he removed to **Einsiedlein**, a famous centre of Romish pilgrimages, where he attracted much attention by boldly assailing the superstitious worship of the Virgin Mary. When, in 1518, the venders of indulgences appeared in his neighborhood, he exposed their iniquities with equal zeal. Transferred in 1519 to **Zurich**, he continued to preach with energy against the abuses in the Church. Fasting, enforced celibacy, and the withholding of the cup from the laity, became in turn the ob-

jects of his attack. His fiery eloquence, aided by a free distribution of Luther's writings, carried all before it, and in 1524 the canton of Zurich renounced its allegiance to Rome and re-organized the church within its bounds in accordance with Zwingli's ideas. Other cities followed suit, the legal civil authorities in each case formally declaring in favor of the Reformation and assuming the direction of all religious affairs. Thus the movement in Switzerland was chiefly concerned in the **abolition of external abuses**, and bore from the first a marked political character. It was the aim of Zwingli, further, to **reject everything not expressly commanded** by the Word of God, and thus break away as completely as possible from the established religious customs; whereas Luther advocated the retention of whatever was harmless, and laid all the stress of his ministry by voice and pen upon the underlying doctrines of repentance and faith.

It was in connection with the **doctrine of the Lord's Supper** that the difference between the two movements was to find its culmination. Luther, whose deep spiritual nature lived and moved in the realm of divine mysteries, found no difficulty in conceiving of the bodily presence of the Lord with the earthly elements of the communion. Zwingli's practical mind, on the contrary, welcomed the theory which removes all mystery and makes the sacred meal but a memorial celebration. The conception was more congenial, also, to the restless superficial spirit of the martial cantons of the Swiss and to the minds of self-complacent Humanists. It found ready acceptance in **South-western Germany** among the pupils of **Erasmus**, who were then very widely scattered and **influential**. It was proclaimed as the reasonable.

advanced view, whereas Luther was supposed to be in this, as in his treatment of other external ceremonies, but half-awakened from his popish dreams.

The unseemly strife between brethren grew more bitter as the years rolled on. The arguments of Zwingli appeared to Luther, by severing the two natures of Christ, to rob His atoning work of its efficacy and thus destroy the very basis of the Gospel. His suspicions were confirmed when he found Zwingli wavering upon the doctrine of original sin, and so exalting the virtues of the heathen as to apparently deny altogether the necessity of the atonement. He failed to note in the writings of the latter any evidence of that deep sense of personal guilt which lay at the very foundation of his own experience and which even yet at times so entirely overpowered him. When, in addition, he observed Zwingli's constant exaltation of the spiritual, as entirely apart from all relation to outward ordinances, and found him teaching a direct influence of the Holy Spirit, independent of the divine Word, and looking to political schemes for the furtherance of the Gospel, he became more than ever convinced that the spirit of the latter was identical with that of the Fanatics and would eventually lead to the same excesses. He, therefore, waged a relentless and indiscriminating warfare against the "Sacramentarians," who, upon their part, led by Zwingli and Oecolampadius, never wearied of ridiculing the superstition of the "Bible-tyrants" at Wittenberg.

None lamented the strife more sincerely than Luther. He declared that "the gates of hell, the entire papacy, the Turks, the world, the flesh and all the powers of evil, could not have wrought such injury," and that he would gladly lay down his

life many times over to restore harmony; "but," he added: "the Word is too strong; it holds me captive." In March, 1528, he published an exhaustive treatise, entitled: "**Confession upon the Lord's Supper. M. Luther.**" This he designed to be his final utterance upon the subject, and in it he warns all the world to abandon the idea that he can ever be induced to depart from the positions here maintained. Should he do so, he begs posterity to attribute the wavering to bodily or mental infirmity, and still regard this treatise as the expression of his immovable conviction. To the further replies of Zwingli and others, he paid no attention. He had borne his testimony, and could do no more.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE BRAVE PROTEST.

WHILE this bloodless conflict was being waged between the opposing champions within the ranks of those who had escaped from the dominion of papal errors, their **common enemy** was not idle. Bavaria had furnished a number of martyrs to the cause of the Reformation, among them **Leonard Kaiser**, a personal acquaintance of Luther's. The latter published a graphic account of Kaiser's arrest while on a visit to his dying father and of his cruel death at the stake, praying that God might enable him, when his hour should come, to meet death with but half the fortitude of his heroic friend. Under a new wave of persecuting zeal, a number of evangelical preachers were driven out of Austria. **Paul Winkler**, a pastor in Halle, summoned to Aschaffenburg to answer for having administered the communion in both forms, was assassinated upon the homeward journey. His death was extolled by Luther as peculiarly glorious, because encountered while in obedience to the lawful authority and in defence of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

Upon the other hand, the Reformation had made **notable conquests**. Margrave George, of Frankfurt-Brandenburg, in 1527, re-organized the church upon his territory under the direction of ministers furnished by Luther, and became a zealous adherent of the cause. Brunswick, Hamburg, Goslar, Lubeck and Goettingen openly espoused the truth.

But the Emperor had meanwhile again resolved upon aggressive measures. Having captured Rome and made the Pope a prisoner, he had concluded terms with the latter embracing a pledge of stringent regulations against the Lutheran heresy. The Diet assembled at **Spire** on **February 21st, 1529**, was called upon to face a stern imperial mandate, requiring the abrogation of the edict of toleration issued three years before, and expressing in no measured terms the displeasure of the monarch at the spread of the revolutionary doctrines. The Romish party at the Diet, encouraged by this assurance of the Emperor's support, and being in the majority, resolved that, in sections in which the Edict of Worms had hitherto been honored, its requirements should still be carried out, while in other places **no further innovations** should be made until the meeting of a general council. Doctrines and sects which deny the presence of the true body and blood of Christ in the sacrament were not to be tolerated in the kingdom. No ruler was to give shelter to religious fugitives from a neighboring territory.

Thus, while the Diet did not undertake to restore the old order of things where already abandoned, it pledged its authority to prevent the spread of the new principles, and to perform police service for the persecuting princes in the restoration of such as might escape from their grasp. It was, further, very broadly hinted that severer measures would ere long be adopted.

The evangelical members of the Diet **could not be thus terrified** into submission. To yield now would be to surrender all that had been won by the arduous toil of years. Only one question divided their counsels for a time. Should the followers of Luther make **common cause** with



the Zwinglians, who, according to the resolution aimed solely at them, were to be driven from the kingdom? The Landgrave Philip pleaded for their recognition, while the Elector John was in doubt. The question was referred to Melancthon, and upon his advice it was decided to include these in any defensive measures which might be adopted.

On the 19th of April, John of Saxony, Philip of Hesse, Margrave George of Brandenburg, Duke Ernest of Lüneberg, Prince Wolfgang of Anhalt, and fourteen imperial cities presented a solemn protest against the action of the majority. They declared that, in matters which concern the Honor of God and the salvation of souls, they were compelled by conscience to regard the will of God above all else, and hence could not agree to carry out the resolutions of the Diet. They further maintained that in such matters every one must give account of himself directly to God, and that no one can excuse himself by appealing to the decisions of a majority. The Zwinglians, they contended, should not be condemned without a hearing, nor any such violent measures adopted against them until a council should have pronounced judgment upon their teachings. The signers of this document were spoken of as the "**Protestants**," and their bold, honest course has been immortalized in the adoption of this term as the distinctive designation of the modern Christian Church of the western world outside of the Roman Catholic communion. That which has excited the admiration of posterity is not merely the courage with which this little band stood up against superior numbers and against the Emperor, now flushed with victory, but the ground upon which their action was based, *i. e.*, the clear enunciation

of the **sacred rights of conscience**, as against the domination of majorities or the mandates of tyranny. In this it but gave formal and united utterance to the principles which the Monk of Wittenberg had boldly proclaimed eight years before.

Three days later, the Elector John, the Landgrave Philip and the representatives of the cities of Nuremberg, Ulm and Strassburg **pledged united resistance** against any power which should attack either of the confederates upon the ground of adherence to the Gospel.

It is worthy of remark, that **Luther failed to recognize** either the genuine heroism or the far-reaching significance of the great protest. The rejection of the imperial demands appeared to him as merely the discharge of a plain, unavoidable duty, and with its performance he would have had the adherents of the Gospel rest content. The subsequent organization of the princes and cities for defence alarmed him. He could not be persuaded that the danger was so imminent as to require this, and it appeared to him to imply distrust in the divine power. Had not God wonderfully protected them hitherto without any human aid? Were it not far better to confide in Him now than to lean upon an arm of flesh? He greatly feared, further, that the cause of truth would suffer by alliance with the Reformers whose views were at such variance with his own. Melanchthon, too, became very uneasy, and regretted the part which he had taken in encouraging the "terrible protest." Thus Luther's courage and the natural timidity of Melanchthon combined, in this as in later periods, to **discourage political combinations** which might transfer the conflict from the tribunal of free discussion to the arbitrament of arms.

But the horizon was already dark with threatening clouds. The Emperor and the Pope had no scruples to restrain them from religious warfare, and the Protestants might at any moment be called upon to draw arms in self-defence. How important then that they be united and prepared to act in concert against their common enemy! Resistance of such demands as those now made, would not, it was claimed, be insurrection. But Luther was immovable. He maintained that it is the duty of subjects to endure wrong when perpetrated by those in lawful authority, and to look for deliverance to Him who can control the hearts of princes and overrule the trials of His people to their own final advantage. But the increasing gravity of the situation led to a careful scrutiny of this sweeping doctrine of submission, as applied to political affairs, and no one could longer doubt that, if driven to desperation, the majority of the princes would be ready to lift the sword in self-defence.

The most serious difficulty in the way of a cordial confederation of all the evangelical forces now lay in the doctrinal differences which yet divided the great emancipated host. How these could be reconciled became the pressing question of the hour.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE MARBURG COLLOQUY.

IN all the political plans of the Protestants, **Philip of Hesse** now held the place of undisputed leadership. His youthful energy, his unflinching courage and his sagacity well fitted him for the perilous pre-eminence. He had honestly embraced the fundamental teachings of Luther, but rather from intellectual conviction than from deep religious motives; yet he was willing to maintain his convictions at all hazards. None realized more clearly than he the serious dangers now threatening, and he was untiring in his efforts to unite all the anti-papal elements. It seemed to him an incredible infatuation that such a union should be prevented by a mere doctrinal dispute among the theologians, and he cast about for means of overcoming this needless obstacle. Already before the Diet of Spires he had declared that there **must be a conference** between Luther and **Eccolampadius**, if it cost him 600 guildens to effect it. After the lines had there been so deeply drawn between the two great parties, the necessity of harmony among the friends of the Reformation became still more evident, and Philip at once cautiously addressed himself to the task of bringing the warring theologians face to face.

The **Wittenberg men** had no sympathy whatever with the movement, and sought in every honorable way to avoid a meeting which they felt could accomplish nothing more than further alienation. But they could not resist the urgency of

the Landgrave and the wishes of their own prince, who felt that the refusal of a request so seemingly reasonable would certainly be misinterpreted.

Zwingli, on the contrary, was filled with delight upon receiving the invitation. Having succeeded in extending his influence in Switzerland, he had conceived the idea of forming a great international confederacy to resist the Emperor's encroachments. He had even made propositions of alliance with the King of France on the east and Vienna on the west, ignoring thus the most extreme religious differences for the accomplishment of his political dream. If the proposed conference should achieve no more, it would at least enable him to gain the sympathy of Philip, and with it the support of all Southern and Western Germany. History accords to Zwingli a genuine religious zeal, but for him religion and politics were one, and his patriotism and piety were now alike aflame with the idea of grasping the golden opportunity to throw off the yoke of mediæval bondage.

Fearing opposition to the project upon the part of his friends, the Swiss reformer slipped away from Zurich secretly on September 1st. He spent twelve days at Strassburg seeking to advance his cause, and, arriving early at Marburg, the place of meeting, secured an audience with the Landgrave before the arrival of Luther with his party. On Friday, October 1st, by a prudent arrangement of Philip, Luther was closeted for three hours with Ecolampadius, while in another room Zwingli and Melancthon compared views.

On the following day, the formal discussion began. It was, according to the official instructions, to be an "outspoken, friendly and undis-

putatious conversation." A number of theologians and scholars were present, and the Landgrave himself followed the discussion with unflagging interest. Directly before the latter, at a separate table, were seated Luther, Zwingli, Melanchthon and Ecolampadius. Luther, who had written with chalk upon the table-cover: "**Hoc est corpus meum**" (This is my body), opened the colloquy by announcing that he proposed merely to maintain the positions which he had assumed in his writings, and that, if the opposite party had anything to advance against the truth, he was ready to hear and refute them. He proposed that a wide range be given to the discussion, as he understood that the Swiss entertained erroneous views upon a number of the most vital subjects, such as original sin, the nature of Christ, baptism, etc. The latter expressed themselves as willing to testify their belief upon these subjects, but desired to begin the discussion with the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, to which Luther agreed.

For two days the debate continued, without developing any arguments not previously advanced. Again and again, Luther pointed to the words upon the table, and at length tore off the cover and dramatically held it up as the final answer to all the objections of his opponents. A private meeting of the theologians on the following morning proved equally fruitless.

Zwingli and his party then desired that they be heard in regard to the other articles of faith to which reference had been made, and Luther, upon request, at once prepared a statement in fifteen brief articles for mutual consideration. They covered the leading topics of his own teaching, and, to his amazement, were accepted on the same day, with a few slight verbal changes, by all the theologians present.

Thus the differences had been narrowed down to the **one point**, *i. e.*, the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The Landgrave was delighted, and exhorted both parties to toleration and the exercise of brotherly love. Zwingli and his friends readily agreed to so conduct themselves, and proposed that all should consent to acknowledge one another as brethren, and that each party should welcome the other at the Table of the Lord. With this proposition, Zwingli extended his hand to Luther, but the latter refused to make such acknowledgment of fraternity, declaring, as he had frequently done during the colloquy, "You have a **different spirit** from ours." Zwingli pleaded, even with tears, and, turning to the Landgrave, declared: "There are no men in the world with whom I would rather be in harmony than with the Wittenbergers." But in vain. Luther was ready to grant to the opposite party only such exhibitions of Christian love as are due to one's enemies. To the declaration of the fifteenth of the adopted articles, acknowledging the spiritual presence of the Lord in the Holy Supper, was added the statement: "But, although we have not agreed at this time whether the true body and blood of Christ are bodily in the bread and wine, yet each party promises to exercise toward the other Christian love, in so far as the conscience of each will at all allow, and both parties earnestly implore God, the Almighty, that He may through His Spirit grant us the right understanding." The **articles were then signed** by Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas, Osiander, Brenz, Agricola, Ecolampadius, Zwingli, Bucer, and Hedio, and at once given to the press.

No act of Luther's life has been subjected to more diverse comment than his refusal to take

the proffered hand of Zwingli at Marburg. In the light of our modern ideas of mutual toleration, it has the appearance of insufferable bigotry; but a candid consideration of the circumstances must greatly modify, if it do not entirely reverse, such harsh judgment. Let it be remembered that the colloquy was **not an unbiassed gathering** of theologians to discuss religious subjects for their own sake. It was planned in furtherance of a political scheme which Luther did not approve, but which his opponents considered vital. The desire upon their part for Luther's endorsement did not therefore spring from pure Christian love. Again, the **point at issue** was not a vital one in the judgment of the Swiss, while to Luther it appeared to involve the very foundations of the Christian faith. The denial of it seemed to him to indicate contempt for the plain language of the Scriptures, the rejection of the divinity of Christ and a profanation of His most sacred ordinance, as well as to open the door for all manner of godless fanaticism. Nor did the assent of these men to the other articles satisfy him. His astonishment was mingled with **deep suspicions**, as he knew how strongly political considerations prompted them to seek at least apparent harmony. Upon the one point which had for years been made the test-question between the diverse tendencies, and in view of which alone the conference had been called, not the slightest approximation to harmony had been made.

Should Luther now allow the report to go abroad, that he had at the critical moment compromised with the enemy? Should he thus cast the weight of his influence in favor of what he believed to be an unholy alliance which would deluge the land in blood and incur the wrath of



the Almighty? No! he would not allow his name to be thus misused. He would make **no compromise with error**, even under the guise of charity. He whom the threats of an Emperor could not terrify was not to be subdued by the tears of a disappointed politician. He was immovable—as ever, true to his convictions.

That those who bear the name of Luther to-day should be led by his example upon this critical occasion to **permanently refuse fellowship** at the Lord's Table with all who do not accept in full the strictest Lutheran view of the sacred ordinance, can be consistently maintained only upon the supposition that the persons thus excluded really occupy the position attributed to Zwingli and his followers, i. e., that they are insincere in their professions of piety, despisers of God's Word, inspired by Satan in their stubborn opposition to the truth. Luther's denial of altar fellowship was no mere protest against the error of an acknowledged Christian brother: it was an indignant rejection of all fellowship with those whom he conceived to be the most dangerous enemies of Christ. He is a bold partisan who would to-day ascribe such a character to all professing Christians without the bounds of our own Lutheran church.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### PREPARING TO MEET THE EMPEROR.

THE colloquy at Marburg rendered a permanent service in leading to the preparation of a concise statement of the chief points of evangelical doctrine. Prepared in haste, within at most a few hours, by the master hand of Luther, this brief formula proved the living germ from which was developed the remarkable **confessional literature** of the sixteenth century, which has moulded the entire subsequent history of the Protestant church.

Before leaving Marburg, Luther and his associates received instructions from the Elector to prepare a statement of the articles of faith which might serve as a bond of union for the Protestant League, a meeting of which was to be held at Schwabach on October 16th. To meet this requirement, Luther simply recast the Marburg Articles. The latter had been prepared with a view of securing as far as possible the assent of the Swiss theologians. No longer restrained by such considerations, Luther now expressed more positively his own convictions, especially upon the subject of the Lord's Supper. He inserted also an article setting forth the Church as the general fellowship of believers, in contradistinction from the hierarchical view of the Romanists—a doctrinal position which has maintained its place substantially in all the great Protestant confessions. The seventeen articles thus originated, afterwards known as the "**Schwabach Articles**," were acceptable to the Saxon court, but, on ac-

count of their stricter tone, proved unsatisfactory to the South German delegates at the convention, and action upon them was postponed. They failed of acceptance also, for the same reason, at a larger convention held at Smalcald, on November 29th; but, while rejected by those who inclined to Zwinglian views, they were influential in strengthening the convictions of those who still followed the leadership of Saxony.

As Luther returned to Wittenberg, all eyes were turned in a new direction. The **Sultan Soliman** was storming Vienna. The imaginary war with the Turks, for which the Pope had so often collected large sums in Germany, had become a reality, and the land was filled with terror. Luther, who had in his earlier writings ridiculed the insincere outcries of the papal emissaries, and who might have foreseen advantage for his own cause in this new embarrassment of the Emperor, now proved his patriotism by publishing a "**Martial Sermon against the Turks**," summoning his countrymen as Germans, regardless of their religious differences, to respond to the call of the Emperor and defend their firesides from the barbarous foe. The Landgrave Philip proposed that no aid be given to the Emperor against the Turks unless he should first guarantee religious peace to his subjects in Germany; but Luther was unwilling to enter into any negotiations of this character, maintaining that the support of the lawful authority of the land is a simple duty which must be discharged at all hazards. He sought to overcome any scruples which might be entertained against warfare under such circumstances, although it might be just as clearly a duty to disobey the Emperor should he summon his subjects to war against the Gospel. Soliman

was defeated, and the threatening peril for the time being averted.

On February 24th, the Emperor was crowned by the Pope at Bologna, and at once announced his purpose of visiting Germany in person. A Diet was summoned to meet at **Augsburg** on the 8th of April, professedly to "heal the divisions in the Church, committing the errors of the past to the judgment of the Lord, and, after patiently hearing the opinions of all parties in the spirit of love and forbearance, to arrive at harmonious views of Christian truth." The Elector John, upon receiving the imperial notice on March 11th, immediately instructed Luther, Jonas, Bugenhagen and Melanchthon to prepare a statement of the points in controversy for the use of himself and his friends at the Diet. The result of their labors in response to this call, handed to the Elector ten days later, is known to history as the "**Torgau Articles.**"

The Elector and his counselors, realizing what a wide field of discussion would be opened up if the terms of the official summons were observed at Augsburg, and resolving to be **prepared for every possible emergency**, gathered in advance all books and papers within their reach throwing light upon the religious questions at issue or upon the mutual relations of the Emperor and the estates of the realm. Three chests were required to carry these valuable documents.

In April, Luther, Melanchthon and Jonas journeyed with the electoral retinue as far as **Coburg**, near the border of Saxony, where the Reformer was to find a secure refuge in the castle. It was his desire, and that of his prince as well, that he should accompany the party to the Diet, but, as he was still under the ban of the empire,

it was not thought best to so openly defy the authority of the monarch. Luther naïvely expressed to a friend his suspicion that he was left behind because he was known to have a troublesome tongue.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A SECOND IMPRISONMENT.

ANOTHER ride in the night, which must have vividly recalled the events of nine years before, and Luther found himself again in a "region of birds." The fine old castle on the bank of the Itz met every requirement of quiet comfort. His friend, Veit Dietrich, and a nephew, Curiacus, were commissioned to keep him company, while the thirty servants stood ready to do his bidding. After surveying the grounds, the prisoner-guest spent the afternoon in writing cheerful letters to his friends and mapping out a scheme of work for the idle hours before him. To Melanchthon he wrote: "We have arrived at our Sinai, but we will make a Zion out of it."

His first concern was for his unfinished labors in the translation and expounding of the Scriptures. During the five months of his isolation here he accomplished no little in this direction. When his physical ailments incapacitated him for severe mental labor, he turned from the interpretation of the intricate prophecies of Ezekiel and rested himself by further elucidation of the Psalms. He wrote in Latin upon the walls of his study the quotations from his beloved Psalter: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." "The way of the ungodly shall perish."

He had long cherished the idea of translating the fables of Æsop and publishing them with appropriate comments, in order that the children

might in this attractive form be taught the duty of living "wisely and peaceably among the wicked multitude in this false and evil world." He found time, however, to thus treat but thirteen of the ancient collection.

For exercise, he amused himself by practicing with the **cross-bow**, and his attendant triumphantly recorded a masterly shot which pierced a bat directly through the heart. It was here, as always in his warfare, a creature of darkness that suffered at his hand.

He found unfailling delight in listening to the twittering of the birds. He describes in detail a "**Diet of Rooks**," assembled in a cluster of bushes beneath his window, screaming day and night without ceasing, as though they were all roaring drunk. Great and mighty lords they seemed to him, although he was unable to discern the emperor among them. It afforded him great amusement to observe with what lordly dignity they swung their tails and wiped their bills as they broke down the hedges and prepared to gain a glorious victory over the grain fields. "Success to their pilfering," he cries, "and may they all together be impaled upon a hedge-pole!"

Picking up a stray leaflet with a snatch of an old song upon it, set to music of three parts, he recast the music, added notes for the fourth voice, appended a few doggerel lines to suit the measure, and sent it to Augsburg, gravely recommending to his friends its publication there as a **welcoming ode** to the Emperor and Ferdinand.

His letters to the family circle at Wittenberg are full of the quaintest humor and unfailling good cheer. His power of entering into sympathy with the feelings of innocent childhood is strikingly shown in a letter to his son, Hans, describ-

ing a beautiful garden, with all manner of fruits and flowers, in which were at play happy little children having horses with golden bridles and silver saddles. But, of course, there must be a moral even to this fairy tale, and little Hans is plainly warned that the charming place is open only to children who are good and who pray and study well. A picture of his infant daughter, Magdalena, hung above his table in the dining-room.

On January 5th, word was brought of the death of his aged father. Deeply moved, he grasped his Psalter and hastened to his room to weep. He bewailed the death of such a father, through whom God had bestowed upon him life and all his faculties, and who by hard toil had nourished his tender years and supported him at the University. He recalled the hours of sweet fellowship enjoyed with him in later years, and rejoiced that his father had lived to see the light of truth, and had died peacefully in the faith of Christ. While thus finding comfort, he realized more keenly than ever the awful power of death, and praised God for the grace which enables poor, weak men thus to triumph over it.

But the walls of the Coburg could not confine the Reformer's thoughts to his personal relations. He could not forget the great conflict without. Never was he more confident, more intrepid, more conscious of his special calling. Within three weeks he had prepared an **Address to the Clergy at Augsburg**, by which he proposed to make amends for his bodily absence. He trenchantly reviews the events of the past years; reminds the bishops of the service which he has rendered them in freeing them from the swarms of monks that had, like fleas, infested Christendom; recalls the



long list of abominations against which he had protested, many of which they were in their folly still seeking to bolster up; and warns them of the disorders which must result if they continue to dispute the righteous claims of the Gospel and its adherents. "You know as well as we that you are living without the Word of God, whereas we have it. It is, therefore, our earnest desire and most humble prayer that you may give God the glory, consider, repent and reform. If not, then you will have to deal with me. Living, I will be your pestilence, and dying, I will be your death. You will have no rest from my name until you either reform your ways or perish miserably."

Such was Luther's first contribution to the proposed reconciliation of Christ and Belial at the Diet. We shall have occasion to observe how potent was his influence in all its deliberations. He had, indeed, little hope that the Diet would accomplish any real good. He still spoke of the Emperor as "the good and pious Charles," but believed him helpless as a lamb surrounded by ravening wolves. His only concern was that the representatives of the truth might make a bold and fearless profession of their faith. When reports of wavering and compromise reached him, he became impatient, and sent message after message to stimulate the courage of his friends. To Melanchthon he wrote: "I hate your fears. It is not the greatness of the cause which awakens them, but the greatness of our unbelief. If our cause is wrong, let us recant; if it is right, why do we make God a liar by doubting His promises? Was it to the wind, or to dumb beasts, that He gave the command, 'Cast your care upon the Lord?' I adjure you, who are in all else so valiant, fight against yourself, your own worst enemy."

To Chancellor Brück, the most hopeful in spirit among the little company, he wrote: "I have lately seen **two wonderful things**. First, as I was looking out of my window, I saw the stars in the sky and the whole beautiful firmament of God; and yet I saw nowhere any pillar set up by the Master to support this firmament. Still, the sky did not fall, and the firmament is yet standing securely. Now, there are some who look for such pillars, and would like to lay hold of them and feel them, and because they cannot do this, they tremble and go into convulsions, as though the sky would now certainly fall, for no other reason than because they cannot lay hold upon or see the pillars. \* \* \* The other wonder which I saw was this: Great, thick clouds were floating over us, so heavy that they might be compared to a great ocean, and yet I saw no foundation upon which they rested or stood, nor any tubs in which they were held. Nevertheless, they did not fall upon us, but greeted us with a threatening countenance and fled away. When they were past, there shone out that which held them up, as both their support and our roof, the rainbow. \* \* \* Yet there are some who, in their fear, look upon and regard the thick and heavy weight of waters and clouds more than this thin, narrow and light shadow. They would like to feel the strength of this shadow, and because they cannot do this, they are afraid that the clouds will produce an everlasting deluge."

But this boldness of Luther was maintained only by **earnest prayer**. His associate, Dietrich, has recorded that three of the hours most valuable for study were daily spent in this exercise. Once, by accident, he caught the very language of the earnest, bold petitions: "I know that Thou art

our God and Father. I am certain, therefore, that Thou wilt bring to shame the persecutors of Thy children. If Thou dost not, the peril is both Thine and ours. The whole affair is Thine."

Several vigorous controversial tracts issued from the Coburg. In one of these the subject of purgatory is thoroughly treated. Luther, held by his traditional conceptions, had long been willing to grant the existence of such a place of torture, but he now repudiated the idea entirely, and with unflinching severity uncovered the "shameful lies and abominations" that were based upon the doctrine. He elucidated also more fully than heretofore, in special publications, the **sphere of the Church's power** and its limitations, with special reference to the existing state of things. The tone and contents of these documents must have effectually allayed the fears of any who may have been alarmed by Zwingli's charge that Luther was shrinking back toward the Roman fold.

Numerous personal letters of consolation may be traced to these fruitful months, as well as a careful selection of scriptural passages calculated to bring comfort to those in distress, and a fervent admonition to all to meekly bear the cross. The latter may have been suggested by the arrival of a handsome seal-ring presented by the prince, John Frederick. The original coat-of-arms of the Luther family had been a cross-bow with a rose upon each side. The new design, elaborated by Luther as an embodiment of his theology, he himself thus explains: First, let there be a cross in black within a heart of natural color, that I may be reminded that faith in the Crucified saves us. Although it is a black cross, which crucifies and may be expected to give pain, yet it leaves

the heart in its own color, does not destroy nature, i. e., it does not kill, but preserves alive; for the just lives by his faith in the Crucified. Let the heart stand in the midst of a white rose, to indicate that faith gives joy, comfort and peace. Let the rose be white, and not red, for white is the color of spirits and all angels. The rose stands in a field of celestial color, because such joy in the Spirit and in faith is a foretaste of the heavenly joy now assured to the believer and to be freely revealed hereafter. Around the field of blue let there be a golden circle, to indicate that the blessedness of heaven endures forever, and is precious beyond all joy and wealth, as gold is the noblest and most precious metal.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE GREAT CONFESSION.

AT length the Emperor arrived with great pomp at Augsburg. His first order forbade the preaching of the Protestant party, and required them all to join in the procession on the following day, which was the festival of Corpus Christi. The latter finally agreed to yield the liberty of preaching for the time being, provided the same restriction were laid upon their adversaries. In the idolatrous procession, however, the Evangelical Princes declined to participate, asserting that their consciences would not allow them to do so. The concession was regarded as a great victory by the Romish party, who themselves cared but little for the privilege of preaching; but the absence of so large and respectable a portion of the Diet from the procession was a striking evidence of the widespread defection from the papal ranks.

Melanchthon had toiled faithfully in recasting the Articles of Schwabach and Torgau. The result of his labors, since known to the world as the **Augsburg Confession**, having received the endorsement of Luther, was signed by the Protestants on June 23d and presented to the Diet June 25th. The Emperor desired that it be quietly handed to him, but, upon the demand of the signers, permission was given for the reading of the German copy, a duty which was admirably performed by the Saxon Chancellor, Bayer.

The document, in the first twenty-one articles, presents the leading doctrines of the Scriptures

with judicial calmness and dignity, in language of transparent simplicity, and then, in seven articles, designates the leading abuses against which testimony had been borne by the Reformers. Luther read and re-read the articles, delighted with their lucidity and literary finish, declaring that he could not have trodden so lightly, yet well satisfied to find in them the essentials of the faith. When he learned that they had actually been presented to the Diet as the unanimous confession of the Evangelical Estates, his exultation was unbounded. He saw in the act a fulfilment of the declaration of the Psalmist: "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed," and thanked God that he had lived to see the day.

The course of history has fully justified his estimate of the event. The political combinations and plans, which to many seemed matters of supreme importance, are now well nigh forgotten, but the **Augsburg Confession yet stands** before the world as the vital embodiment of the spirit of the Reformation and one of the grandest trophies of the Christian ages. In it we find, in perfect combination, Luther's prophetic vision of profoundest spiritual truth and Melancthon's matchless skill in accurate expression. It has been practically the model for all subsequent Protestant confessions, and, translated into many languages, the firm bond of union between all branches of the great Lutheran communion.

The reading of the Confession made a **deep impression** upon the assembly. Its principles were so largely in accord with the accepted doctrines of the Church, so reasonable, and so convincingly stated, that prejudices faded away before it, and the bitterest enemies were inspired with deep respect for their antagonists.

Four cities, led by Strassburg, presented through their representatives an independent confession, known to history as the **Tetrapolitana**, and **Zwingli** addressed to the Emperor a statement of his own views and those of his immediate associates. Of the latter, nothing more was heard, while the former attained some importance at a later day as an exposition of views intermediate between those of Luther and Zwingli. Neither played any further part in the proceedings of the Diet.

The Emperor appointed a commission of leading Romish theologians to prepare a **Refutation**. The result of their labors, after having been several times referred back to them as unsatisfactory, was finally accepted and read to the Diet on August 3d as the expression of the Emperor's views, in accordance with which he proposed to regulate his course in the matter. The request of the Reformers for an official copy was refused. Three days later, Philip of Hesse, in disgust, left the city without imperial permission.

Various efforts were made to effect a **compromise** between the opposing parties—a result to which the Emperor would have by no means been averse. The Romanists, under the direction of the papal legate, **Campeggio**, who was extraordinarily liberal in his own views, made large concessions upon points of doctrine, while **Melanchthon** was ready to yield much in the sphere of outward observances, even to the extent of recognizing the jurisdiction of the Roman bishops in the temporal affairs of the Church. Weeks of tedious negotiations proving utterly fruitless, the Emperor on September 17th announced that he would labor to secure the calling of a general council, but that the Protestants must meanwhile conform to all the requirements of the established

Church. The latter replied, as at Spire, that they could not disobey their consciences.

After further parley, the Emperor on September 22d declared that the **Confession** had been **refuted and rejected**, and that he proposed to unite with the Pope and other Christian princes in exterminating the troublesome sect that had given it birth. The Elector John left Augsburg on the following day. Luther joined his retinue at Coburg, and, after spending some days with the court at Torgau, returned to Wittenberg. He had taken no interest in the proceedings following the presentation of the Confession, except to examine and passionately condemn the various formulas of compromise suggested and constantly urge his friends to steadfastness in maintaining the truth which they had so gloriously confessed.

The **formal edict** was promulgated November 19th. It allowed the Protestants five months for reflection, promised earnest effort to secure the calling of a council within six months, but forbade in the meanwhile the printing or sale of evangelical documents or the making of proselytes, and demanded the restitution of cloisters, submission to the authority of Romish bishops, etc. Luther set the example of obedience (?) by publishing at once a **scathing review** of the "so-called imperial edict," in the name of the truth defying "all emperors, whether Roman, Turk or Tartar, Pope, cardinals, bishops, priests, princes, lords, and the whole world, with all the devils besides." He denounced the apparent friendliness of the papal party, as but manifesting their willingness to sacrifice the very central doctrines of their system touching salvation if they might but secure their hold upon the benefices and maintain their scandalous dissipation.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### WAR CLOUDS STAYED.

**THE** question whether **armed resistance of the Emperor** would under any circumstances be justified, now became an intensely practical one. Luther still urged the duty of submission to lawful authority at any sacrifice. But when the counselors of the Elector pointed out that the Emperor's course itself was illegal as he was transcending the limits of the authority vested in his office by the constitution of the empire under which he had been elected, Luther finally withdrew his opposition, casting the responsibility of deciding the legal questions involved upon the jurists, within whose province such matters lay. Scruples of consciences being thus allayed, the princes were not slow in preparing for the worst. At a convention of the Smalcald League, held in December, the confederates resolved to resist with their united forces any attempt to execute the edict of Augsburg.

**Duke Ferdinand** was in January, 1531, in accordance with the Emperor's desire, but in disregard of the constitutional rights of the German princes, crowned **King of the Roman Empire of Germany** at Cologne—a step calculated to greatly facilitate the execution of the Emperor's plans on German territory during the prolonged absences of the latter. The Evangelical Princes were strongly averse to the new arrangement, but only the Saxon Elector ventured to enter public protest against it. The lines were now firmly

drawn upon both sides, and all looked forward with anxiety to the inevitable clash of arms.

The cities of Southern Germany were still excluded from the confederation of the evangelical princes upon doctrinal grounds. Through the active mediation of Bucer, they were now induced to adopt a new formula, subscribed also by Œcolampadius, in which they approached much more nearly to Luther's view of the Lord's Supper. This document, though not altogether satisfactory to the latter, led him to assume a more tolerant attitude, and was regarded by the princes as a sufficient concession to entitle its signers to representation in the Smalcald League, which was thus greatly strengthened.

All efforts to prevail upon Zwingli to modify the statement of his extreme views proved futile. He became, however, more deeply involved in the political conflicts of his native land, and met a patriot's death upon the field of Cappel, October 31st, 1531. Œcolampadius died a few weeks later, and the influence of Switzerland in the doctrinal discussions of Germany rapidly waned, while the crushing defeat of Zwingli's plans banished all thought of political combinations in that quarter.

Having entered the field of politics, the League now embraced the opportunities soon afforded of forming strange alliances. The Dukes of Bavaria, although strict Romanists, were exceedingly jealous of the encroachments of the Emperor and stood ready to join the Protestants in resisting the latter, while the Kings of France and England, impelled by similar motives, sent messages of encouragement. All such movements could but increase Luther's instinctive distrust of the entire method of political confederation.

He insisted that the cause of truth would be much safer if left simply in the hands of God.

But the cry for peace now came from the camp of the adversary. The Turkish army again invaded Austria in the spring of 1532, and the services of the Smalcald heroes were sorely needed by the Emperor. He proposed therefore to grant to the actual members of the League immunity from persecution until the assembling of the proposed council. The latter were not satisfied with the concessions granted, but insisted that similar privileges should be accorded to any others who might in the future join their ranks. It was only by the most strenuous efforts of Luther that they were finally induced to accept the terms thus offered. The "**Religious Peace of Nuremberg,**" which was then guaranteed, while but a temporary arrangement, was a great triumph for the cause of the Reformation. It gave official recognition and political standing to the followers of the lonely monk who had eleven years before been proclaimed an accursed outlaw. Yet it came unsought, and was possible at last only because that same monk exerted all his influence to hold the princes firm in their allegiance to the Emperor who had condemned him. The papal representatives wept in mortification to see all their plans of persecution thus thwarted, but Luther gratefully exclaimed: "God has mercifully answered our poor prayers."

The Elector **John the Steadfast**, through whose unflinching zeal the renewed Church had been so firmly established upon Saxon territory, died in the faith, August 16th, 1532, his life's work being well rounded out in the achievement of the long-desired religious peace. Luther wept like a child as he delivered the funeral address,

in which he attested in glowing terms the Christian character and the faithful friendship of the departed prince. The son, **John Frederick**, who succeeded his honored father, had been from childhood an ardent admirer of the great Reformer and continued to maintain relations of the greatest intimacy with him, combined with almost reverent regard. However storms might beat without, in his own home-land Luther was now, and to the end of his days, assured of a sympathy as cordial as ever existed between a generous prince and his most honored subject.

## CHAPTER XX.

### HARMONY AMONG BRETHREN.

WITH the year 1532 began for Luther a period of comparative immunity from distracting conflicts. He was now enabled to devote himself anew to congenial literary labors. In 1534 he finished his translation of the Bible, including the Apocrypha, and published the first complete edition. In the following year appeared the richest product of his academic lectures, his large **Commentary upon Galatians**, in which he develops with all the ardor of his earlier days the supreme importance of simple faith, and depicts in glowing terms the atoning work of Christ. He found great delight also in prosecuting his **lectures upon Genesis**, preached frequently in his own house and in the church, and conducted a wide and constantly growing correspondence.

To the broadening influence of these devotional labors is doubtless to be in large measure attributed the remarkable mildness now displayed by the Reformer toward those who differed with him upon important points. Nor was this merely a passing mood. During the years now before us, the desire that all earnest friends of the Gospel might be united in bonds of mutual confidence finds frequent expression in his correspondence. To attain this, he declares that he would gladly lay down his life. Not for the sake of political advantage does he desire it, but for the honor of Christ's name and the spiritual advancement of His kingdom among men.○○While

not abating a tittle of his own views, he met with candid cordiality the efforts of Bucer and others to secure harmony among all who professed with him the cardinal doctrine of salvation through faith alone.

A colloquy of theologians, held at **Cassel** under the leadership of Melanchthon and Bucer, prepared the way for a fuller conference, which was called by the authority of the Elector John Frederick and Philip of Hesse, to meet at Eisenach in May, 1536. As Luther was unable to leave his home at the appointed time, the theologians assembled at **Wittenberg**. The timorous Melanchthon, who dreaded a fresh outbreak of the earlier strife, having used every effort to delay the assembling of the conference, failed to appear at its opening session. It soon became apparent that a great advance had been made by the ministers of Southern Germany in the direction of Luther's views. After a free expression of sentiment upon the doctrine of the Lord's Supper and a private consultation of the Wittenberg theologians in an adjoining apartment, Luther, with beaming countenance, announced that he and his associates were prepared to extend the **hand of fraternal recognition** to all the assembled brethren and those whom they represented. The declaration was received with tears of joy, with folded hands, and reverent ejaculations of thanksgiving to God.

On the following day, no difficulty was experienced in attaining harmonious conclusions in the statement of **other leading doctrines** upon which opinions had differed. The next day, being the festival of the Ascension, Luther preached with more than his usual power from the great commission of the departing Lord to His Church:

“Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” It was, further, brought to light that even in **Switzerland** the extreme views of Zwingli had been abandoned by many, and all agreed to deal kindly and patiently with any who might still cling to the teaching of their former leader.

The celebration of the holy communion with the Wittenberg congregation on the Lord’s day was a **public confirmation** of the happy conclusion of the deliberations. The use of candles and clerical robes in the services awakened some anxiety among the delegates from remoter sections, but their fears were allayed when they were assured that but little importance was attached to these ancient forms and that they were often designedly omitted.

On Monday morning a formula drawn by the hand of Melanchthon was signed by all the participants. It was understood, indeed, that the little company there present could speak only for themselves, and that their conclusions would be binding upon others only when formally accepted. But the “**Wittenberg Concord**,” with its cordial endorsement of pulpit and altar fellowship, effected a practical union of the evangelical churches of Germany, which was maintained until the outbreak of new controversies after the death of Luther.

The movement thus happily consummated must be credited, in its inception, to the zeal of the practical Philip of Hesse and the mediation of the indefatigable Bucer. Their planning would have been futile, however, had it not been for the remarkable **persistency of Luther** in advocacy of the conference and his readiness to tolerate the utmost divergencies of statement which did not

for him necessarily involve a denial of fundamental truth. It is a circumstance not to be overlooked, that the first effectual summons to harmony and toleration within the ranks of the reformed Church went forth from Wittenberg.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### PARLEYING WITH THE PAPISTS.

THE Peace of Nuremburg assured immunity from persecution only to those who were already attached to the cause of the Reformation. As if in mockery of this feeble attempt to check the rising tide, the following years were marked by almost constant defections from the ranks of the Romanists. Philip of Hesse found occasion to snatch Würtemberg from the control of the Hapsburgs, and at once re-organized its churches upon evangelical principles. One after another, the important cities along the Rhine, including Augsburg, and whole sections of Northern Germany threw off the yoke. The Smalcald League had become a power to be respected. Even the Emperor and the Pope began to realize that it would be impossible to crush this vigorous movement by force of arms. Events in the political horizon were constantly reminding the former that he might at any moment sorely need the support of a united Germany.

Within the same period there had arisen an influential party within the Roman Catholic church which sincerely desired a reform of flagrant abuses, and was willing, to this end, to welcome even the Protestants to a general council, in the hope that by due concessions they might yet be induced to acknowledge in some sense the authority of the Pope. Upon the death of Clement VII. in 1534, his successor, Paul III., promised to summon a council to meet at Mantua

and dispatched a diplomatic messenger to Germany to awaken an interest in the project, or at least prevent the threatened calling of an independent council of the German churches. The legate, **Vergerius** by name, exceeded his instructions when, led by curiosity, he visited Wittenberg and invited Luther and his friend Bugenhagen to breakfast with him. The Reformer, appreciating the humor of the situation, had himself smoothly shaven that he might appear young and vigorous, put on his best clothes, with a golden chain about his neck, and, to use his own expression, "played the genuine Luther" to the dismay of the disconcerted dignitary, treating him with scant courtesy and shocking his sense of propriety by the boldest self-assertion. The legate left in indignation, in his report of the interview denounced Luther as a "beast," but thirteen years later renounced a lucrative position and publicly adopted the principles of his unmanageable guest.

The Pope having proclaimed May 23d, 1537, as the date for a general council, the Elector requested Luther to prepare a statement of the doctrines which he would maintain at all hazards before a council or when brought face to face with death and the throne of judgment, and to present the same to his foremost associates for their endorsement under the same solemn sanctions. The result was the document known to history as the **Smalcald Articles**. It presents the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession in Luther's own vigorous style, with an additional pungent article upon the papacy. It was carried by the Elector to a convention of the Protestant allies held at Smalcald in February, 1537, but there was no occasion for its presentation, as the heroic princes

at once declared that they would have nothing to do with a council pledged in advance to the condemnation of the truth and so constituted as to be subservient to the will of the Pope. The significance of this **Smalcald Convention** lies chiefly in the fact that it presented the first direct and open defiance of the papal authority upon the part of the Protestant Estates.

Luther, who with Melanchthon and Bugenhagen had accompanied the Elector, was taken **seriously sick** soon after his arrival at Smalcald, and it was thought for a time that the attack would certainly prove fatal. He longed to die upon Saxon soil, and with many misgivings the homeward journey was undertaken. The members of the convention gathered about as he was placed in his carriage, when, sitting up, he made the traditional sign of the cross above the throng, saying: "The Lord fill you with His blessing, and with hatred of the Pope."

The apparent disposition upon the part of the Papists to compromise aroused all the old fire of the Reformer. He published in rapid succession a series of pamphlets in vigorous polemic tone, followed in 1539 by a large work entitled, "**Of Councils and Churches,**" in which he utterly shattered the claim of infallibility made in behalf of the papal councils, and marked out in broad lines the characteristics of the true Christian Church.

While Luther continued thus to storm the tottering fortifications of the papacy, the hand of Providence was working wondrous transformations in the political aspect of the nation. Duke George, of **Ducal Saxony**, the bitterest personal enemy of Luther and his cause, died suddenly soon after, following his two sons to the grave, and

his brother Henry at once granted to the people of the realm the Gospel privileges long denied them, and now eagerly welcomed. **Brandenburg, Mecklenberg** and distant **Denmark** had also become Protestant territory.

At a convention of the **Smalcald League** held at **Frankfort** in April, 1539, a delegate from the Emperor gave the assurance that no active measures would be taken against the Protestants for the next eighteen months, and that the German Estates should be permitted, at a convention called for the purpose, to name a committee who should endeavor, in conjunction with a commission appointed by the Emperor, to formulate a basis of union between the opposing parties in Germany. This was a large concession. It made provision practically for what the Reformers had long desired—a **council of the German Church**, with no reference to the authority of the Pope. The latter was furious, but the Emperor was in position, at that particular juncture, to profit by the alarm of His Holiness, and hence continued to encourage the hopes of the Protestants.

After a series of preliminary meetings, including a four-days' colloquy at **Worms** between **Melanchthon** and the old arch-enemy of Luther, **John Eck**, the Emperor at length decided that the religious questions should be freely considered at a regular **Diet of the Empire**, to be held at **Ratisbon** in the spring of 1541. He himself appointed a **commission** of three representative men from each party, **Eck, Klug** and **Grupper** on the one side, and upon the other **Melanchthon, Bucer** and **Pistorius**. The selection indicated a real desire upon the part of the Emperor to effect a reconciliation of the opposing parties, and the attempt was made under the most favorable circum-

stances. It is of special interest for us to note that Luther, who was at this time so tolerant toward variant factions in the Evangelical party, had no faith whatever in any favorable result from these negotiations with the Papists. While advising his friends to meet the advances of the Emperor in a kindly spirit, and always welcoming opportunities to discuss the points at issue, he calmly warned his hopeful associates that these schemes would not succeed unless a reconciliation could first be brought about between Christ and Belial.

The work of the commission at first proceeded with astounding rapidity. **Formulas were adopted** upon the subjects of the original state of man, free will, the origin of evil, and original sin. Upon the vital question of **justification by faith**, the Romish theologians yielded the traditional doctrine of their church, and agreed to a statement which might be understood in a strictly evangelical sense, though leaving some room for an undue exaltation of man's own works of love.

At this stage of the work, its results were **submitted to the Elector John Frederick**. His attention was at once fixed upon the cumbrous article upon justification by faith. Too many words!—said the honest, straightforward man—and the force of its positive statements neutralized by the “but” in the last clause. He sent it post-haste to **Luther**, who fully endorsed the judgment of his prince. No patchwork for them! Still, the Reformer, waited upon by a special committee sent from Ratisbon, responded in terms so courteous that they were almost mistaken for approval, and advised his own friends to interpose no obstacle to the work of the commission. Let them go on. The Papists will surrender everything that concerns merely the salvation of souls, but

they will grow stubborn when it comes to the discussion of the papal authority and the idolatrous masses. The prophecy was fully justified. The further colloquy served only to bring out into the clearer light the **irreconcilable differences** between the contending parties. The Emperor desired that the articles upon which harmony had been attained should be adopted by the Diet ; but the papal party declared that the doctrines upon which no approach to agreement could be made were the most important, and the Pope sent messages denouncing the concessions already made. The whole attempt was finally abandoned, and the Diet simply confirmed for an indefinite period the religious peace granted at Nuremberg.

The result of these tedious negotiations was doubtless, upon the whole, **favorable to the cause of the Reformation**. They proved that it was not personal feeling nor mere stubbornness that actuated the Reformers, but their devotion to a great principle, a principle now more clearly than ever seen to be totally irreconcilable with the hierarchical system of Rome. They suggested further, only too plainly, that were it not for her lust of power, Rome herself, as represented by her foremost theologians, would be almost prepared to acknowledge that, in the great doctrinal battle of a quarter of a century, Luther had already gained the victory.

It remained only for the Pope to rally his forces, and in a council of his own (opened at **Trent**, December 15th, 1545) to repair if possible the breaches made in the doctrinal defences of his own party and set up a new standard with which to meet the victorious hosts that now marched with the enthusiasm of deep conviction beneath the banners of the Augsburg Confession.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### STANDARD OF MORALITY.

THE critics of Luther were not slow to charge upon his doctrine of justification by faith a tendency to undermine the foundations of morality. His unsparing assaults upon the boasted good works of the Papists seemed to give countenance to the charge of comparative indifference to the outward deportment.

In meeting this objection of his adversaries, Luther found himself in the very worthy companionship of the **Apostle Paul**, and was as little disturbed by it as was the latter. Both alike rejected the idea of basing salvation upon any work of man. Both gave all the glory to the unmerited grace of God extended to all who sincerely depend upon the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ. Only wilful blindness could fail to see that such faith as they advocated must bring forth good works as surely as a good tree will bear good fruit.

The assertion of one of Luther's former associates, **Agricola**, that good works are not necessary at all, giving rise to the annoying **Antinomian Controversy**, was refuted by Luther to the satisfaction of all but its author; and the history of the Protestant Church is a standing witness to the truth, that the faith that justifies is a faith that abounds also in the work of the Lord.

The **personal life** of Luther himself was above reproach. He was abstemious in his diet, habitually so absorbed in his work as to have little re-

gard for the pleasures of the palate. Of dissipation he would, even as a student, know nothing. Purity of thought and strong control of all carnal passions marked his entire career, and lifted him above the aspersions of his bitterest foes in an age when flagrant lapses from the path of social rectitude were accounted venial offences.

He was, however, **no ascetic**. He was constantly assailing the prevalent error of the day, which mistook a proud austerity for virtue, and kept the consciences of men in bondage by the minute requirements of the code of monastic self-mortification. He claimed for himself and others the **right to enjoy** the good things of life, and sometimes shocked the sensibilities of those who yet clung to the gloomy ideals of the past by the boldness of his language in defence of personal liberty. If we ourselves are startled by the references of his biographers to the gifts of beer and wine that were gratefully accepted, we must remember that the idea of total abstinence from intoxicants for the sake of the weak brother was foreign to that age, and that Luther himself was most guarded in the use of alcoholic stimulants—was, in fact, regarded as a model in this respect.

With a clear conscience, therefore, he could lift up his voice in earnest warning to his countrymen against the ravages of the "**drink devil**," who notoriously held the poor Germans in such abject bondage to his dominion. At the time of his death, he had in contemplation the preparation of a special treatise upon the subject.

His terrible arraignment of the **monastic system** as a nursery of vice is too well known to require more than passing mention. Already in 1520, in his *Address to the Nobility*, he demands action by those in authority for the suppression of



licentiousness ; and one of the first fruits of the Reformation in the territory of Saxony was the closing of disreputable places of resort.

In later years, when princes were his friends, his regard for them could not restrain him from scathing denunciation of the loose morality of courts. The growing luxury of the commercial cities, and the reckless expenditures of even the poor peasants, drew from him indignant protests. The frivolity of the rising generation, the tendency to immodesty in dress or in deportment, the keeping of late hours, and the frequenting of public houses, were all frequent subjects of unsparing condemnation from the pulpit.

The duty of filial obedience, learned in his early home and strictly enforced in his own household, he maintained with unflinching fidelity. The duty of a child to its parents he placed far above any claim which the Church or society might have upon it. One of the most serious charges which he brought against the papal church was that it claimed the right, like the Pharisees of old, to make this commandment of God of none effect by its traditions. He regarded his own monastic vow on this account an impious one, and sought to make some slight amends for his early filial impiety by displaying the most scrupulous regard for his father's wishes throughout the remainder of his life.

The custom of secret espousals, recognized by the jurists of the day upon the basis of the old canonical laws, aroused his indignation. Mere children were thus permitted to enter into the most solemn compact of life without the knowledge of their parents. Luther fiercely assailed the practice, and from the pulpit boldly censured the jurists and the civil authorities for encourag-

ing such violations of the Fourth Commandment. The latter retorted angrily, but finally were compelled to succumb before the tremendous moral energy of the faithful pastor, and the abuse was abolished.

We have seen how Luther, by teaching and example, honored the institution of marriage. It should not surprise us to find his conception of this sacred relation somewhat limited by the earlier distorted ideas in regard to the normal relation of the sexes. The conjugal bond was regarded too exclusively in its lower, carnal aspects, or as a matter of social economy, and the spiritual relationship upon which it should be based, and which gives to it its highest sanctity, had not yet come to due recognition. This deficiency, so natural in a carnal age and among men trained under the false system of monasticism, became painfully manifest in the assent of the Reformers to the bigamous marriage of Philip of Hesse. The latter, having found the companion of his youth uncongenial, proposed, with her consent, to wed another, and inquired of Luther and his associates whether the Gospel forbids polygamy. They replied that such a practice is contrary to the general divine order and sure to work incalculable injury; but they could find no express scriptural prohibition. They inferred from its permission in the lives of the early patriarchs that it might be allowable in exceptional cases. Philip naturally inferred that his own case fell under the latter category, and the ceremony was performed in the presence of Melancthon. It must be acknowledged that, in this single instance, the judgment of the Reformers was inferior to that of the princes and simple laity and to the position of the Roman

Catholic church. They fell into the error by failing to note the imperfection in the moral enlightenment of God's people in the early ages and through their own imperfect conception of the high moral unity involved in the marriage relationship. The unfortunate affair brought **perplexity and shame** upon all connected with it, and, as Philip was the leader of the Smalcald League, it cast discredit upon the entire cause of the Protestants. Melanchthon's distress on account of it very nearly cost him his life. Luther afterwards saw his error, but found consolation in the fact that he had acted conscientiously.

In estimating the zeal of the Reformer for practical morality, we must remember that it was **not his chief providential mission** to rebuke the open vices of his day, but rather to uncover the hidden wickedness that lurked beneath the boasted superior holiness of the professed teachers of morality and religion. It was only when this, his peculiar work, had been almost accomplished, and his energies concentrated more and more upon his own more immediate surroundings, that he came into really close contact with the vices of the rude multitude. His castigations of these offenses among his own people was then fully as unsparing as had been his denunciation of his bitterest enemies. Nor was his vehemence in vain. The authorities of the city and University adopted more stringent measures for the restraint of dissipation. Thus, through all the years of conflict with iniquity, whether found lurking in the dark or parading in the light of day, this Man of Faith was continually by his intense moral earnestness overthrowing the works of the devil.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### HOME LIFE.

No portraiture of Luther can be complete which does not bring distinctly into view the **husband and father**, finding daily refreshment in the circle of loved ones in his humble but always hospitable home. The monastery in which his active career had been begun remained his place of residence, and became his personal property by gift of the Elector John shortly before the latter's death. Its construction according to the original plan had never been completed, and extensive repairs were frequently necessary. Yet it was commodious, and connected with it was an excellent garden. To its bare walls we have seen Luther lead his brave-hearted Katie, but, by the blessing of God, the dark spectre of want was ere long banished. The annual salary from the electoral treasury was from time to time increased, and gifts from various sources added to the equipment of the home. Additional land was bought immediately adjoining and in the neighboring village of Zulusdorf. Luther himself estimated the **value of his estate** shortly before his death at about 10,000 florins, his income from other sources being at the time 400 florins. He might, as his wife was accustomed to lament, have been quite rich had he been like other men; but he always refused to accept any money for his books, although others made fortunes by the sale of them. His **free-handed generosity** was known far and wide, and not seldom abused. Judged by ordinary stand-

ards, his donations to the needy were far beyond his ability. To the protests of his frugal wife he was accustomed to reply: "We have a rich Father."

To his own household he welcomed an aunt of his wife, several children of a deceased sister named Kauffman, at one time four orphans whose parents had died during a siege of pestilence, tutors of his growing children, students at the University, and the fugitive wife of the Elector of Brandenburg. His friends often made long visits, passing strangers were always cordially welcomed, escaped monks and nuns found a comfortable refuge until homes or employment could be secured for them, and there were frequent celebrations of family birthdays and similar occasions of festivity.

The burden of all this hospitality fell upon the faithful Katie, whose tireless energy and wise economy alone could save the household from bankruptcy. She found especial delight in her "kingdom," as Luther playfully called it, at Zulsdorf, with its cattle, poultry and crops; while Luther himself was content to amuse himself in the monastery garden, grafting the trees and watching the birds. They both enjoyed fishing in a little pond near the monastery. He himself bore loving testimony to her fidelity in ministering to all his wants, and his cordial letters, written to her whenever duty called him from his home, give abundant evidence at once of his genuine respect for her character and his sincere affection.

Six children were borne to them, of whom Elizabeth died in infancy and Magdalena at the age of thirteen. The father was in each case heart-broken. The scene at the death-bed of Magdalena was deeply touching. Digitized by Google Bending tenderly

over her couch, the man before whom princes quailed himself trembled like a leaf. "Lena, dear," he said, "you would like to stay with your father here, and yet you will gladly go to your Father in heaven." "Yes, dearest father," she replied, "just as God wills." With streaming tears he then prayed for her release from pain and weakness, and, as she breathed her last, turned to comfort the weeping family. "I have given heaven a saint," he exclaimed. "O, that we might die thus! Such a death I should welcome this very hour." No other event in his life so deeply moved him. He sought to allay his grief by reflecting upon her happy state, but there were times when his tears could be stayed only by his swelling indignation at the ravages of death, and of him that hath the power of death, the devil. Thus even sorrow could but stimulate to more earnest warfare against the prince of evil.

The daily intercourse of the Reformer with his children was unrestrained and cordial. He delighted in watching their innocent pranks, romped with them, told them wonderful tales embellished by the rich hues of his ever-vivid imagination, and in every way sought to make their early years as bright as his own had been stern and cheerless. He taught them faithfully from the Bible and the catechism, and encouraged them in the cultivation of whatever musical talent they possessed, his own lute and clear tenor voice always leading in the family chorus.

The influence of the peaceful evening hours thus spent in maintaining the joyous, hopeful spirit of the great witness for the truth, who found in the world without little but corruption and strife, can scarcely be overestimated. Luther as a lonely monk would have been crushed with

discouragement beneath the burdens which Luther as the happy head of a Christian home carried so lightly. Here he was kept in touch with what is purest and best in human life. Here his tender heart found sympathy and poured out in return more than it received. Here, as in a little world, he studied human nature and learned to speak words of comfort and cheer that echoed in many other homes when clouds of sorrow lowered.

Here, too, was manifested most clearly the **sincere, child-like piety** of the man. Merrily and unreprieved might pass the jest and song from lip to lip, but the Unseen Presence was never forgotten in that home. The most trifling incidents were made to teach lessons of reverence and trust. The Scriptures were quoted naturally and aptly as illustrating all manner of passing themes. Every evening closed with prayer, and at nine o'clock, however popes and emperors might rage without, the sentiment of David found literal fulfilment in the experience of this royal servant of David's Lord: "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

The results of this home training, as seen in the lives of Luther's children, were not disappointing. None of them was endowed with extraordinary talent. John became a lawyer, meeting with a fair measure of success in his calling. Martin studied for the ministry, but never assumed its active responsibilities, dying at the age of thirty-three years. Paul became a physician of considerable note, filling positions of trust at several courts. Margaret was married to a Prussian nobleman, Von Kunheim. They all bore excellent reputations, and lived as worthy members of the Church, enjoying and not abusing the liberty

of conscience won for them, as for many millions, by the dauntless courage of their revered father.

Nor should we fail to thank God for the **example of that Christian home.** It was a city set upon a hill, whose light shone far and wide, dispelling clouds of error which had darkened the nations for centuries. It did more perhaps than even Luther's ponderous words to crush out the "doctrine of devils" which dared to cast dishonor upon that state which God had distinctly pronounced holy. It encouraged thousands of priests to establish family altars, and emancipated multitudes from the stifling moral atmosphere of convents. It gave back to the Church, instead of the prying priest, the sympathizing friend and pastor. Lofty indeed was the vocation of the man, who not only pointed the way to a heavenly home, but whose influence was destined to dot the sinful earth with domestic temples resounding through the ages with carols of peace and anthems of praise.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### SICKNESS AND DEATH.

THE Herculean tasks accomplished by Luther under manifold distractions and under burdens of responsibility such as had rested upon no other champion of the truth since the days of the apostles, imply the possession of a bodily constitution naturally vigorous. He could scarcely, however, have been pronounced at any stage of his career a healthy man. The excessive rigor of his monastic days had told upon him. His pale face and haggard frame were a subject of comment when he stood before the Diet at Worms. The seasons of deep spiritual struggle through which he passed at intervals had probably some connection with incipient physical disorder. We recall the helpless condition which so often interrupted his labors at Coburg in 1530. From that date onward his **bodily ailments increased**, and he was compelled to condition all his engagements for travel or literary labors upon the state of his health. Again and again, at important junctures—while in the pulpit, upon his journeys, or engaged in negotiations with representatives from distant churches—he was suddenly overcome with intense pain or dizziness. Several times he appeared to be at the point of death, and bade solemn farewell to his family and associates. During the last twenty years of his life the shadows of the approaching end were seldom lifted. To his friends he habitually spoke of himself as an old and worn-out man, and often sighed for deliverance from an evil world.

Yet of this no trace is to be found in the character of his polemical or devotional writings. When he grasped his pen for practical work, he was ever the same Luther still. His hand was steady, and his great soul poured itself out in clear analysis, in terrible invective, or in the joyous utterances of a triumphant faith. His body was but a feeble instrument, quite forgotten when the glowing spirit rose to deal with the great themes of salvation and eternal life. His latest writings are in every respect as vigorous as any which preceded them.

The clear conviction that the hour of his departure was rapidly approaching had, however, a marked influence upon his disposition toward those whose views differed in some respects from his own, but who yet accepted the fundamental doctrines of human helplessness and divine grace. With the Roman Catholic Church he had no longer the faintest desire of reconciliation. He recognized more clearly than any other in that age the impassable chasm that separated him from the papal fold. It was not only the glaring abuses of that Church against which he protested, but the entire conception upon which it was based he regarded as the product of impious deception and human pride. In his dying hours he begged his friends to pray the Lord to protect His Church against the mad assaults of the Pope and his counselors then assembled in the Council at Trent. But, from the time when the truth had been so boldly confessed at Augsburg and compromise with extreme error rejected at Marburg, the desire for harmony with all who held the essential truths of the Gospel grew constantly stronger, until it became the passion of his soul. He longed to see the emancipated hosts of

Christ's true followers bound in loving fellowship before his eyes should close in death. This inward yearning in the mighty soul in which the Reformation itself had its birth found concrete expression in the "Wittenberg Concord," which remains for all time a monumental witness to the broad spirit of brotherly love which lay beneath the often stern exterior of the great Reformer.

In the closing years of his life, however, the old spirit of distrust was re-awakened. Incidental references in his writings of the years 1539-41 to the theory of Zwingli, whose views he regarded as abandoned by all but a few of the latter's immediate followers, aroused angry protests in Switzerland. The discussion which followed developed the fact that some German theologians still inclined more to the views of Zwingli than to his own. It was whispered that some of his intimate associates, notably Melancthon, were no longer sound upon the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. When the custom of elevating the host was quietly discontinued in the Wittenburg church, the report was circulated that even Luther himself had abandoned the doctrine of the bodily presence of Christ in the sacrament. This was too much for the brave, bold man. His charity was being misinterpreted. The peace which he had advocated seemed, after all, to be based upon hypocrisy. His own testimony was being beclouded. He shuddered to think that death might overtake him while apparently blindly loitering in the camp of the enemy. It must not be. With terrific energy he hurled new thunderbolts to right and left, regardless of resulting alienations. He rejected all overtures of peace, and rejoiced the more, the more bitterly he was denounced by the "Sacramentarians." He

wanted all the world to know that these rationalistic interpreters were his foes, and to this end sought to arouse their animosity to the highest pitch by stating his own positions in the boldest and most offensive terms possible. The longing to depart in peace was now supplanted by the passionate **determination to die in armor**, waving his gleaming sword in defence of the whole truth as God had given him to see it. How largely this change of attitude was justified by the real situation is a point upon which historians have differed; but it would certainly be an occasion for lament if the tone of these late passionate utterances were to be adopted as the normal tone of theological discussion in times of peace. It is sufficient for us to see in them the Reformer's dying plea for sincerity and openness in the expression of religious convictions.

The **closing scene** of this dramatic life is happily one of reconciliation. Serious alienations had for some time prevailed in the mutual relations of the Counts of Mansfeld, Luther's early home-land. It was finally agreed to submit the matters in dispute to his decision. Despite his weakness, the extreme cold, and the protests of his friends, he gladly undertook the mission, leaving his home with his three sons and other members of his household January 23d, 1546. Floods in the Saale—a great Anabaptist, Luther called it—delayed them for some days in **Halle**, where he preached a **vigorous sermon** against papal abuses. A violent attack of sickness upon the journey he attributed to the devil, who, he declared, always assailed him when he had any great work on hand. At **Eisleben**, where the negotiations were conducted, he preached **four sermons**, the last on February 15th, and also or-

dained two young men to the Gospel ministry. Twice he partook of the Lord's Supper. He maintained an almost continuous correspondence in his most genial style with his wife and his bosom-friend Melancthon, and enlivened the serious labors of his errand by frequent sallies of his unfailing humor. He found an intensely embittered feeling between the parties at strife, which had been greatly aggravated by the intervention of others. Prayerful earnestness and patience upon his part, and the boundless regard of all for his character and counsel, at length effected a **complete reconciliation.**

Luther, feeling indisposed, was excused from attendance at the final meeting on the 17th, in which the details of the agreement were arranged in legal form, and remained in his room during the morning. He was present at the **evening meal**, leading the conversation as usual, intermingling serious themes with sallies of playful humor. At eight o'clock he withdrew to his room, and spent some time standing before the window engaged in **audible prayer.** He then rejoined the company, and spent an hour with them in pleasant sociability. During the night his condition became serious, and friends and neighbors were called to his side. His **last connected words** were: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, Thou faithful God." As his bodily senses were rapidly failing, one of the company called loudly to him: "Reverend Father, do you still hold firmly to Christ and the doctrine which you have preached?" to which he replied distinctly: "Yes,"—then turned upon his side and peacefully expired.

As the tearful funeral procession moved out of the village, the reconciled Counts of Mansfeld

rode in advance, a public testimony that the last triumph of the Hero of the Reformation was a triumph of peace. Dying in the place of his birth, his remains were fitly borne to the scene of his labors and solemnly interred within the walls of the Castle-church, upon whose doors he had nailed his great proclamation of the Church's emancipation. His toil was ended, but his life's work was but begun. The principles which he proclaimed have directed the course of modern progress, and so long as the world loves liberty, or the Church rejoices in the doctrine of free grace, can neither fail to cherish the memory of Luther, the Reformer.

**END.**













**HAY, Charles Ebert**  
**Luther, the reformer.**

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