

LIGHT AMID THE DARKNESS AS SEEN IN THE LIFE OF LUTHER

by Charlotte Mary Yonge

A biographical account of Martin Luther's life from his early years in Magdeburg to his role as the leader of the Protestant Reformation. Written for younger readers, it portrays Luther's journey from poverty-stricken student to world-changing reformer.

31 Chapters

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01 Chapter 1.Luther's Early Life — A.D. 1483-1501.

Chapter 1.

Luther's Early Life — A.D. 1483-1501.

About the year 1497 might be seen a group of lads going about the city of Magdeburg (a strongly fortified city on the Elbe in lower Saxony), crying, "Bread for the love of God."

They were not rude beggars like those we sometimes see in this country, nor were they those who liked begging better than working. No, these boys were glad to do any odd work they could find, their great aim being to get enough to eat that they might stay at the famous school at Magdeburg, so as to be educated. Their desire, and the earnest desire of their parents, was that they should be able to attend that school, and in order to do this the boys often had to do with very little food, and to lodge in any place where they could find a shelter.

How the children in England and elsewhere ought to value the privilege of being able to attend school without having to beg their bread, or to be subject to such privations!

One day, near to Christmas time, these lads were going through the surrounding villages, chanting some Christmas carols, when a man called out in a gruff voice, "Where are you, boys?" when they were all so terrified that they took to their heels and ran away. But he continued to call them, and at length they ventured to return, and found he wanted to give them some food. They had met with so many rebuffs that the man's gruff voice only awoke their terror.

One of these lads was Martin Luther. He tells us that this was the way in which he had to obtain his education. In after life he said, "Do not despise the boys who try to earn their bread by chanting before your door, 'Bread for the love of God.' I have done the same."

Martin was born November 10, 1483, at Eisleben, a town in upper Saxony. It was about eleven o'clock at night on what was called St. Martin's Eve, which was the reason he was called Martin. His father's name was Hans (which answers to our John) Luder or Luther, and his mother's name before she was married was Lindemann. His parents were pious, and solemnly devoted their son Martin to the Lord as soon as he was born, and we shall see as we trace his history how God accepted him from their hands and greatly used him to spread His truth. When Martin was only six months old, his parents went to reside at Mansfeld. At this time they were very poor. His father was a woodcutter, and his mother often had to carry the wood on her back to help to support her family. But after a time Martin's father erected some furnaces for iron, and came into more easy circumstances, and was afterwards made one of the council of the town. This brought the family into good society as it is called, and Martin used to enjoy sitting and listening to those who visited his father. Martin's bright eye at times attracted their attention, and they would ask him questions, from which he never shrank. He made good progress with his studies; at six years old he could read and write well.

Martin's parents loved him, but they were severe in their treatment. "My parents," said he many years after, "treated me cruelly, so that I became very timid; one day for a mere trifle my mother whipped me till the blood came." His master too was very severe. Martin said that on one occasion he flogged him fifteen times in one day. Doubtless Martin's resolute disposition early shewed itself, and this severe discipline would have the tendency to make him more determined, even when wrong. It was a severe school; but it may have been used of God to fit him for his after course in which resoluteness was so much needed to persevere, when nearly every one was against him. But at the village schools not much was to be learned, so when Martin was fourteen years old his father resolved to send him to a celebrated school at Magdeburg. In May 1497 two lads with wallets on their backs, and staff in hand, left Eisleben to trudge to Magdeburg. They were sad at leaving their parents, and entering upon an unknown path. One was Martin and the other his friend Reinick, about his own age. When there, as we have seen, they had to beg and sing for the means to live.

Martin stayed at Magdeburg about twelve months, when his parents, hearing of the difficulty their son had to obtain food, sent him to another celebrated school at Eisenach, a well-built town on the river Nesse, where he would be near to some of his relations. His father still found it was as much as he could do to maintain his family at Mansfeld, without paying for the support of Martin at Eisenach. But Martin's relatives took no notice of him, and here he was as badly off as before. He had, with some of the other students again to sing in the streets for a little bread. But he often received nothing but harsh words, which filled him with gloomy thoughts. Must he give up the studies he loved so dearly? His troubles made him weep. But no, he need not give them up. He was going to be used of God to do a great work for Him, and in an unexpected manner He brought him relief.

One day he had been more than usually unsuccessful, and was about to return to his lodging hungry and faint: but he unconsciously stopped before a house and was lost in painful reflections, when the door was opened and the good woman of the house invited him in, and relieved his immediate wants. This was Ursula, wife of Conrad Cotta. She had often noticed his pale face had been struck with the sweetness of his voice, and had observed his apparent devotion at the church. Her husband on his return approved of his wife's benevolence, and shortly afterwards they invited Martin to come and live with them altogether.

Now all was changed for Martin. He had no more trouble about his food, and he could now pursue his studies with renewed energy. God had provided a home for him in a family professing Christianity. Happy Martin! He often with gratitude looked back in after life to the happy hours he spent in the family of Conrad and Ursula Cotta.

Martin was never ashamed of his deep poverty. He afterwards considered that this was a part of God's school to make him what he became. Think of this, my youthful readers, and do not repine over your seemingly hard lot, no matter what it may be. If you are where God has placed you, you are in the right place, and all other places would be wrong for you. And God can bless the greatest hardship to your good. The intercourse of this pious family was blessed to the young man. He became more calm, and his heart enlarged. He was very fond of music, and learned to play the flute and lute, which led in after days to his composing both hymns and tunes for christian worship. It is commonly believed that the favourite tune the Old Hundredth was composed by him, as well

as the well-known one called "Luther's."

02 Chapter 2.Luther at College — A.D. 1501-1505.

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Luther at College — A.D. 1501-1505.

Martin's happy sojourn with the Cotta family must be broken up. He had been at Eisenach four years, and had outstripped all his fellow-students; and now he longed to go to a University for further instruction. His father had confidence in his son's ability, and Martin was sent to the University of Erfurt* in 1501. His father desired him to study the law; but Martin was to be God's servant to do His work. We shall see as we proceed how God brought it about.

{*An ancient fortified town of Saxony situated on the Gera. The Augustinian convent in which Luther used to live was burnt down, with all its relics, his portrait, Bible, etc., in April, 1862.} The professed Christianity in Germany in those days was the Roman Catholic; and at the University of Erfurt a great deal of time was spent in studying what was called "scholastic philosophy," as set forth by such men as Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, and these things Martin — or as we must now speak of him, Luther had to study, but of which he afterwards declared his utter hatred. He took greater pleasure in the writings of Cicero, Virgil and others.

Luther was not at this time a Christian, but he was a devout young man. He felt his dependence upon God. He used to say, "To pray well was the better half of study."

Now there was a library at Erfurt, and in this young Luther used to spend his spare moments, looking over the various volumes. One day, as he was looking over the books, a certain one attracted his attention, and on opening it he found it to be THE BIBLE. Luther had never seen one before, and he had no idea that the Bible contained more than the various extracts he had heard read in the church. But here was chapter after chapter and book after book he had never seen or heard of.

Only think how different the times were then from what they are now. Here was a young man who had professedly christian parents, and had lived for years in a pious family, and yet had never seen a Bible. Books were then very scarce and very expensive; but besides that, the Roman Catholics used to keep the Bible away from the people, and not allow them to read it, saying that they needed the church to explain it. But besides this, the Bibles were then mostly in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; so that but few could have read them if they had had them. How thankful we in England ought to be that the Bible is not hidden from us! For a few pence we can buy and read God's holy book.

Well, Luther had found a Bible. It was in Latin, and he could read Latin. With the deepest emotion he turns over its leaves, and one of the first things that he reads is the beautiful story of Hannah and young Samuel. He is overjoyed. He has found God's book. "Oh," thought he "if God would but give me such a book for my own." But he must leave it, but only to return again and again as opportunities offered. The more he read, the more he wondered and admired. It was light — God's

light — amid the darkness.

Thus God had brought His servant Luther to His book, the Bible. God had many a battle for His servant to fight; and for this he must have God's weapon, and be able to use it. Well, the Bible is the weapon God gives to His servants — it is "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" — and I have now told you how God put His own weapon into Luther's hands.

He not only valued the Bible himself, but as he discerned its value as God's book he recommended it to others. To a student who was laboriously studying the law, he recommended the law of God. "He who knows the text of the law thoroughly," said Luther, "will never go wrong. We must do the same, study the text of the Bible, and not busy ourselves so much with systems and commentaries. At the spring head we find the purest water, and we see better with our own eyes than with another's."

About this time Luther became very ill. He had been up for his examination. He was successful and was now a Bachelor of Arts, but through excessive study his health had been seriously affected, and many thought he would die. He was a favourite with the whole University, and much sympathy was shewn towards the sick young man, and many came to see him. One, a venerable old man, had observed the attention of the young student, and he now came to visit him. To him Luther deplored that he was soon to be summoned away. But the old man replied, "My dear bachelor, take courage! you will not die this time. Our God will yet make you His instrument in comforting many others. For God lays His cross upon those whom He loves, and those who bear it patiently gain much wisdom." This comforted Luther, and he often remembered it afterwards. It was as a word from God to his soul.

03 Chapter 3.Luther a Teacher — A.D. 1505.

Chapter 3.

Luther a Teacher — A.D. 1505.

Luther soon recovered and resumed his studies until 1505, when he was made Master of Arts. The University of Erfurt was now the most celebrated in Germany; and to be Master of Arts was no mean honour. Luther was duly installed with all the pomp usual in those days; there was a procession by torchlight and a general rejoicing.

Luther began now to teach philosophy, though he continued his studies, turning his chief attention to the law according to the special desire and purpose of his father concerning him. But, as we have said, God intended Luther for His servant, and the law must not be his study. To this end God made him unhappy and unsatisfied with all his learning and with all his studies. His conscience would not let him rest. He knew too much of God's hatred to sin, and too much of what would be the penalty of sin unless he were a recipient of the grace of God. Could he honestly say he believed he was a recipient of that grace? He was compelled to answer, No; he could not. Then how could he be happy? What would studying to be a lawyer do for a guilty conscience? No. He must seek by all means to obtain a good hope of eternal life. But at present his alarm was to be increased.

One morning a report was raised that Luther's friend Alexis had been murdered. Luther hastened to ascertain the truth of the report. Alas, it was true: the young man was dead. "What would become of me," thought Luther, "if I were thus suddenly called away?" He could answer the question only with groans, and fearful misgivings filled his soul. But God was leading him on, and he must yet have deeper trouble of soul.

It was still the year 1505, and Luther paid a visit to his parents at Mansfeld during the vacation. He returns to the University, to pursue his study of the law. But when only a short distance from Erfurt he was overtaken by a dreadful storm of thunder and lightning. A thunder-bolt fell close to his side, another might end his existence. He falls on his knees in the greatest agony of mind. What if his time has come! and he unprepared! How can he meet judgment? How can he meet God? He takes it as a call from God, and he makes a vow that if God delivers him from the threatened death he will devote himself entirely to His service.*

{* It is said by some that his friend Alexis was travelling with Luther at this time, and that the thunderbolt that frightened Luther killed Alexis. But the account we give we believe to be the best authenticated.}

Alas, poor Luther, he knew not as yet the value of the blood of Christ that would have cleansed him at once from all his sins, and have given him the good and certain hope of eternal life he so much desired; but instead of this he thinks he must make a vow to serve God in order to be saved. We must not be surprised at this, for those were days of gross darkness, and Luther himself must

go through it all in order to teach others afterwards God's true way of salvation and peace.

Well, Luther rises from the ground as a new man — not perhaps a new man in reality yet, but a man with a new object before him. The question now is, How is he to be saved? This must absorb all other questions for him. How can he appear before God? Can he go with his sins upon him? No: he must be cleansed; he must be holy. And how is this to be attained? He must seek it by all means in his power. He had desired learning, and the University had supplied it. He now desired holiness: where shall he obtain it? Ah, he thinks he knows. He will be a monk: he will shut himself in a monastery; he will keep his body under; he will pray and fast and deny himself. Thus he will be holy and attain unto salvation! He has heard of some who have attained to holiness in this way, and who have surpassed others. Yes, he will be a monk.

Poor Luther, how many a Sunday-school scholar in our days could have told him that this was not God's way to be saved; but that in believing on the Lord Jesus is full forgiveness and salvation. But, as we have said, those were days of gross darkness and this was supposed to be the best way to holiness and salvation, and poor Luther knew not as yet any better. Did we say "those days were days of darkness?" Yes, and yet in many a dark corner of the earth where the light of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has not yet come, this is still the way an anxious sinner would be told is the true way to find holiness and salvation.

One of Luther's friends (Rubianus) afterwards wrote to him, "Divine Providence foresaw what you would one day become, when on your return from your parents the fire of heaven struck you to the ground, like another Paul, near the city of Erfurt." Yes, both Paul and Luther were similarly arrested; but notice the difference. Paul is at once introduced to the Lord Jesus, whom he had been persecuting in His saints, and soon gets forgiveness and peace; but Luther knows Him not as yet, and he becomes a monk. This, though it left Luther still in darkness, was of immense value to him afterwards, inasmuch as it taught him the worthlessness of a monk's vow, and enabled him to deliver others from this great snare.

Luther enters Erfurt full of his vow, and is anxious that nothing shall turn him from it. He must have holiness, and this, he thinks, is the way to it. But how shall he break the news to his friends? He knows that all in the University will do whatever they can to prevent him from going and burying himself in a monk's cell. Still he believes it is God's call, and it must be done, and done quickly.

He invites his friends to his room for a simple meal and social reunion. They have music and singing and all are cheerful and happy. Luther himself seems to excite them to mirth; but at length he can control himself no longer, and he tells them plainly that he is going to be a monk — he is going to attain to holiness and heaven! They are astonished above measure. What, a Master of Arts bury himself in a cell! They urge and plead, and beg and entreat; but all is in vain. He must have holiness, and is not this the way? thought he. That very night, to avoid further entreaty, and while his vow is fresh before him, he leaves his lodging, and repairs to the convent of the Hermits of St. Augustine. He leaves behind what earthly goods he has, taking with him only Virgil and Plautus, for he has no Bible.

He knocked at the gate, saying, "Open in God's name." "What want you?" asked the porter. "To dedicate myself to God," replied Luther. "Amen," said the porter; and he was at once admitted to his new but unknown home; and was separated from his parents, his friends, and the world at

large. He believes he is now with God, and is not that enough? It was August 17, 1505. Luther would be at that time nearly 22 years of age. The cell, it is so silent, Secluded — light so dim — Some hope to meet with God there, And converse hold with Him. The world they think is outside, With all its sin and wile, Yet find they've brought themselves in, With heart deceitful, vile. And when, in isolation, Devotional would be, That heart throws up its vileness, And joy and comfort flee.

04 Chapter 4.Luther a Monk — A.D. 1505-1508.

Chapter 4.

Luther a Monk — A.D. 1505-1508. The monks were rejoiced to receive the young Master of Arts, and commended him much for his resolution of leaving the world. But now came the painful duty of Luther's informing his friends, and especially his parents of the step he had taken. This he did promptly. His friends at Erfurt hastened to the convent to use their influence to induce him to change his mind, but no one was allowed to see him for a full month, that he might not be rescued. The blow was very severe to his father. He had designed for him an honourable secular employment, and he had pinched himself to provide for Luther's college instruction; and after advancing thus far, for all his hopes to be dashed to the ground was a severe trial. Besides he had known many who had become monks and had been ruined instead of being helped. His father wrote him an angry letter, and withdrew his love.

Some tried to persuade his father to look upon it as a sacrifice on his part to God; but he could not be pacified, and it was not till nearly forty years afterwards that his father freely forgave him. In 1544 a plague took off Luther's two brothers, and the then aged father, thus afflicted and broken down, asked God to bless his "disobedient" son Martin — disobedient for not studying the law and for entering the monastery contrary to his father's wishes.

Well, Luther is now a monk. Though the monks received him gladly, they could make no distinctions between him and his less learned brethren, indeed they seemed to delight to humble the Master of Arts. He must be door-keeper, sweep the floor, and clean the rooms. Poor Luther! what a change from being a lecturer in the University!

One day he stopped in his work to read a letter from his father, which was filled with reproaches, and he could not restrain a tear dropping on the letter, when he was startled by a harsh voice calling to him, "Idler, to your work!" He concealed his letter, and catching up the broom resumed his toil. "This is good for me," said he, "my pride must be brought down, destroyed. . . . Was not this that which I sought in entering the cloister? . . . I would become a holy man, and where can I succeed if not here?" As soon as he could he would steal away to his cell, and catch up a book: but the monks would soon be after him, saying, "This is how you waste your time! Come, come; all is not cleared up yet; there is the refectory, and the corridor, and the court, and other places besides. Then you will draw the water, and chop the wood. Do you think we tolerate idlers in the cloister?" Luther submitted. "I desire to learn humility," said he.

There was a Latin Bible in the convent, secured by a chain. This he would study whenever he could. But they drove him away, saying, "Come, come; not so much study! All a monk need know is to read the prayers. It is not necessary to understand them. The devil understands them, and flies away when he hears them. Learning and the fine arts are of no use. A man is useful to the cloister, not by studying, but by begging bread, corn, eggs, fish, meat, money." Then one would put a bag on his shoulder and bid him go and beg in the town. Luther obeyed, and went from door

to door in the town where he had been known and respected. "O Jesus," said he, "Thou who wast God, didst humble Thyself, became a man, a servant, even to the cross! It should be an easy thing for me . . . me a doctor . . . to become a verger, domestic, scavenger, and even a beggar." But this drudgery did not last long. The University petitioned the Abbot of the convent to release Luther from all such labours. This he did, so Luther again could give himself up to study. He had the works of the Fathers of the church; but these did not satisfy him. To the chained Bible he constantly resorted. Sometimes a single verse arrested his attention, and he meditated on it for a whole day. At other times he committed passages to memory, and thus stored his mind with the word of God. He also took to learning Hebrew and Greek, so as to be able to study the scriptures in their original tongues.

Still his aim was holiness and salvation. Amid his studies he would sometimes forget to say the regular number of prayers, and then he had to leave off his studies and repeat the full number. At times he was so absorbed in his devotions that he forgot his food, and many a day he had but a bit of bread and a single herring. Melancthon, afterwards a friend of Luther's, said that in these days Luther went as many as four days without food — he may have meant without anything like a meal; at all events Luther himself long afterwards said, that if he had continued such a life much longer he must have been a martyr to his watchings, prayers, and other labours.

Poor Luther! with all his privations and all his mortifying the body, he seemed as far off as ever from a sense of holiness and an assurance of salvation. Though he had shut himself out from the world, he had carried his evil heart with him into the convent; and from thence evil would rise up and shew him that he was not holy yet; and while this was the case he thought he could have no assurance of salvation. He progressed, however, in this, that he began to learn what he was in himself. It was not the world now as an outward thing tempting him; but it was himself. What came from his own heart did not correspond with the holiness of God. Oh where could he find the remedy?

Those about him could only point to good works as the cure. "But what works," thought he, "can proceed from a heart like mine? How can I, with works polluted even in their source and motive, stand before a holy judge?" He could find no relief. If he detected in himself any sin, he would set to work with renewed energy to make amends for it in self-denial and privation. But all gave him no satisfaction when he had accomplished them. Thus he went on till he became little more than skin and bones. Like a ghost he wandered around the cloisters, making them echo with his deep sighs and his groans. But relief he found nowhere.

Once, being unusually depressed, he shut himself up and declined to see any one for several days. At length one of his brother monks, becoming alarmed about him, proceeded to Luther's cell: he knocked, but received no reply. He was the more alarmed, and burst open the door, when he discovered Luther stretched on the floor apparently dead. His friend tried to arouse him, but he remained motionless. He fetched some young choristers who began to sing one of their hymns, when Luther shewed signs of life, and gradually he recovered his consciousness. He had well nigh passed away; but he was God's man, and God had yet much work for him to do. But as yet he had no peace. He had not attained unto holiness and had no assurance of salvation.

About this time came Staupitz, "the Vicar General,"* to inspect the convent where Luther was. Staupitz soon observed the pale and haggard visage of Luther, and guessed what was the cause

of his dejection. Staupitz was a Christian and had gone through a conflict similar to Luther's, but he had happily found rest and peace in the Saviour. He told Luther that all he was doing was useless. He pointed to the wounds of the Saviour as a cure for all Luther's sorrow — to the blood which He shed on the cross.

{* A Vicar-General was one who overlooked in church affairs and who inspected and regulated the monasteries. Henry VIII. made the Earl of Essex his Vicar-General.} The conversations Luther had with Staupitz were of great value to him; still he did not find full relief, and one day he cried out, "Oh my sin my sin!" But Staupitz pointed out to him that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of real and great sinners, those deserving of utter condemnation. Staupitz could not remain with him: after giving him much excellent advice, saying, "Let the study of the scriptures be your favourite occupation," he presented him with a Bible, and took his leave.

Luther had been helped and instructed; but he was not delivered from the fear of wrath. At times he was as bad as ever, until his health quite broke down and he was brought to the gates of death. An old monk visited him in his cell. He could not argue with Luther as Staupitz had done, but he knew his "Belief," and in that he found relief. In the Roman Catholic Church, as in the English Established Church, they have what is called "The Belief," and in it are these words: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." This had been deliverance to the old monk; and he slowly repeated them over to Luther. Did Luther remember those words? Yes, he had said them hundreds of times. Did he believe them? "You must not believe," said the monk, "that David's or Peter's sins are forgiven: the devils believe that. The commandment of God is that we believe our own sins are forgiven."

Light at once broke into the soul of Luther. He had said for years that he believed in the forgiveness of sins; but had never seen till now that forgiveness was forgiveness. And of what avail to believe other people's sins were forgiven if he did not believe his own sins were forgiven? It was now GRACE that was exalted in his eyes, and as he believed that, he renounced his former thoughts of meriting salvation. He found in Christ what he had searched for so long in himself. He was delivered and found at least a measure of peace. With tranquillity of mind, his health rapidly returned.

Soon after this (1507) Luther was ordained a priest according to the rites of the Roman Catholic church. In the ordination service occurred these words, "Receive the power of offering sacrifice for the living and the dead." Luther at this time knew no better; but for any man to pretend to confer such a power, or to speak now of any other sacrifice than the "one sacrifice" that perfects for ever (Heb. x. 14) is perfectly shocking. Luther afterwards said, "That the earth did not swallow us both up was an instance of the long-suffering of the Lord." Luther's father was present at the ordination though he could not fully forgive his son, but reminded the monks that scripture enjoins obedience to parents.

05 Chapter 5.Luther a Professor — A.D. 1508-1510.

Chapter 5.

Luther a Professor — A.D. 1508-1510.

Luther was soon to leave the convent for an enlarged sphere of labour. Staupitz (who had become a friend of Luther's since they met in the convent) had spoken of him to Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony,* and that prince invited Luther to be a professor at the University of Wittenberg.** Luther felt it his duty to accept the invitation. He quitted Erfurt in 1508.

{* The Elector of Saxony governed his own states and was one of the Princes of Germany who were entitled to elect or choose the Emperor.

** A fortified town in Prussian Saxony, on the Elbe. Many objects of interest, in connection with Luther and his friend Melancthon, are carefully preserved in this place. The University was removed in 1817 and united with that of Halle.}

Now he had to teach philosophy, while his real desire was to unfold the word of God. "I am very well by God's favours," wrote he to his friend John Braun, curate of Eisenach, "except that I am compelled to give my whole attention to philosophy. From the moment of my arrival at Wittenberg I have longed to exchange this study for theology: but I mean that theology which seeks the kernel of the nut, the pulp of the wheat, the marrow of the bone;" meaning the true theology of scripture, and not the theology of the age. "However, things may proceed; God is God; man always errs in his judgment; but this is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide unto death." Thus did Luther evince his confidence in God; and indeed his study of philosophy proved to be of great value to him afterwards. When it was sought to set it up as an authority, he could pull it all to pieces and shew that it had no solid foundation. Scripture must be put in its place.

However, in the next year he became Bachelor of Divinity, and then he daily expounded the scripture to the pupils. This he did in such a clear and simple way that even some of the other professors used to mingle with the pupils to hear his lectures. Mellerstadt, who was sometimes called "the light of the world," was one of his hearers. "This monk," said he, "will put all the doctors to the rout. He will introduce a new kind of doctrine, and will reform the whole church. He builds upon the word of Christ, and no one in this world can either resist or overthrow that word, though it should be attacked with all the weapons of philosophers."

Luther, in coming to Wittenberg as a professor, had not ceased to be a monk. They set apart a cell in the convent of the Augustines in that city for his use, and there he spent many an hour over his Bible. One day, as he was reading the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, he came to verse 17 and read "The just shall live by faith." These words arrested him. There was a new life possessed by some, and that new life was the fruit of faith. How simple, and yet how grand! It entered into his very soul with a flood of light, and, as we shall see, again and again it recurred to his memory in after days with new life and power.

Luther was next invited to preach in the convent pulpit, but he repeatedly declined. "No, no," said he, "it is no light thing to speak to men in God's stead." Staupitz however was not to be denied, and at length he carried his point. Luther began to preach. "In the middle of the square of Wittenberg," says D'Aubigné, "stood an old wooden chapel, thirty feet long, and twenty broad, whose walls, propped on all sides, were falling to ruins. A pulpit, made of planks, raised three feet above the ground, received the preacher." It was in this humble place that Luther began to preach. One has compared it to the stable in which our Lord was born. The place was certainly not attractive, but the preaching was; indeed it created quite a sensation. His predecessors had often been ignorant men, some not Christians, and they had aimed rather to please the people, than to do them good. But Luther knew the value of salvation, and nothing less would do for him than to preach the gospel in the fullest and freest way he knew how. His hearers were astonished and arrested. The place was soon too small, and he was chosen to preach in the city church of Wittenberg. Luther had soon recovered from his dread of preaching and was now in his true element. He delighted to preach and expound the scripture; which was all the more striking as it was in strong contrast not only with what had been preached at Wittenberg, but what was to be heard in the thousands of churches scattered over the empire. In God's truth a light had sprung up amid the general darkness — a light from heaven, and Luther was the bearer of it.

06 Chapter 6.Luther's Visit to Rome — A.D. 1510.

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Luther's Visit to Rome — A.D. 1510.

Luther was continuing his teaching in the University and his preaching in the city church, when he was requested to visit Rome on a mission from seven of the monasteries who had a dispute on some questions connected with their institution.

Now this visit to Rome was doubtless ordered of God, for it was of immense value to Luther. He was attached to the Roman Catholic religion: he must see and know Rome the centre of it. He had known this system of religion in its general character in Germany: should he not find it in its perfection and its purity in Italy and Rome?

He crossed the Alps and made his way to a monastery on the Po in Lombardy. This was a very rich convent and Luther was surprised at the great luxury in which the monks lived. They had taken the vow of poverty: what had become of their vow? The place was like a palace, and they fared sumptuously every day — yes, every day, but it should not have been so according to the rules of their church. On Friday the Roman Catholics should eat no meat, but in this rich monastery they had plenty on that day as on others. Luther protested against it. "The church and the pope forbid such things," said Luther. They were offended, and the porter gave him a hint that he had better leave the place.

He left and reached Bologna, where he was taken ill. Some have thought he must have been poisoned at the convent, but it is probable that it was the rich living that disagreed with him. But alas! he was again distressed in soul. He had not yet found settled peace through the blood of the Lamb. Again the passage "The just shall live by faith" came to his memory and brought relief. He rapidly recovered and proceeded, and at length came in sight of the city of Rome, when he was so overcome that he exclaimed, "Holy Rome, sanctified by holy martyrs and apostles, I salute thee!" When he had known the city better he called it by another name, as we shall see.

Luther was moved to find himself in the city where were enacted many things he had read of in the classics, but especially he thought of the place Rome had in the founding of Christianity and the sublime epistle written to the assembly therein.

He was a pious young monk and he visited many of the churches and monasteries, and every step he took caused him fresh grief and pain. He had expected to find Rome the centre of all that was holy and divine, but he found it unholy and corrupt. When he said mass, his fellow priests were impatient, gabbling over three while he said one, and then bade him, "Make haste, make haste; do have done with it." His mission brought him into company with the higher clergy as they were called; but to his astonishment he found them as bad as the priests. Some were irreverent and indeed profane. Sitting at table, he was astonished to hear them joking with one another on subjects of the deepest sanctity; thus, in the mass they had said the wrong words to deceive the

people: and this they related without a blush, supposing Luther to be one of themselves. But he was not one with them. What was mirth and jollity for them caused him the deepest pain.

"I was a serious and pious young monk," said he; "such language deeply grieved me. If at Rome they speak thus openly at table, thought I, what if their actions should correspond with their words, and popes, cardinals, and courtiers should thus say mass? And I, who have so often heard them recite it so devoutly, how, in that case, must I have been deceived!"

One day the pope had promised an indulgence for all who should go up some steps, called "Pilate's staircase," on their knees. Luther wished to have this indulgence, and he fell on his knees and began to ascend the stairs (which were said to have been miraculously brought from Jerusalem to Rome). Luther toiled on, when all at once a voice like thunder seemed to say to him, "The just, shall live by faith." He was arrested and terrified at his own folly, and at once he sprang to his feet. The stairs were not mounted, and the indulgence was not gained. But what need he of indulgences when God had said, "The just shall live by faith?" He had the faith; and in haste he turned his back on the stairs and the indulgence.

Thus this same passage was pressed home upon him again. By degrees he saw more of God's plan of salvation. As he afterwards said, he had been afraid of and disliked the expression "the righteousness of God;" neither could he love God who was so just; but light broke in, and "I learnt," he says, "how the justification of the sinner proceeds from God's mere mercy by the way of faith — then I felt myself born again as a new man, and I entered by an open door into the very paradise of God. From that hour I saw the precious and holy scriptures with new eyes."

Thus was Luther's visit to Rome blessed to his own soul, while it was of immense value to him to have seen what Rome really was as the centre of the Catholic religion. "If any one would give me a hundred thousand florins," said he in later life, "I would not have missed seeing Rome." He left the city in great grief and indignation.

07 Chapter 7. Justification by Faith — A.D. 1510-1517.

Chapter 7.

Justification by Faith — A.D. 1510-1517.

Soon after Luther's return from Rome, he was invited to be a doctor of divinity. Luther greatly shrank from it, but his friend Staupitz insisted. "The Holy Ghost alone can make a doctor of divinity," exclaimed Luther. But it was of no avail, he must yield. In October 1512 Luther was ordained by Andrew Bodenstein of Carlstadt,* and had to take this oath, "I swear to defend the truth of the gospel with all my strength." This was altogether an unscriptural proceeding, but we are merely relating what actually took place. Luther had truly said that the Holy Ghost alone could make a true servant of God. Quite so. But if the Holy Spirit had made him this servant, he needed not the appointment of man, except as to his place in the University: but Luther did not see this. His taking an oath too was all wrong. If God had appointed him to preach and defend the truth of the gospel (as doubtless He had) he was bound to do it; as Paul said, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 16), but we never read of Paul taking any such oath as Luther took.

{* He was afterwards better known as Carlstadt, and was called by Melancthon A.B.C. from the initials of his names.}

It was well that Luther had to defend "the truth of the gospel" instead of the Catholic or any other religion. Luther was thus bound to the scriptures. He studied them sedulously, and taught the truth as he himself increased in the knowledge of it. The people still thronged to hear him preach. To those whose hearts the Lord had touched the truth he proclaimed was as a great light on a dark night, and they flocked to the church. There they might be seen bending with eager intensity to listen to what was to them new truth — truth which they could get in no other way, for they had no scriptures to which they could turn.

"The desire to justify ourselves," said he, "is the spring of all our distress of heart; but he who receives Christ as a Saviour has peace, and not only peace, but purity of heart."

"Faith in Christ strips you of all confidence in your own wisdom, and righteousness and strength; it teaches you that if Christ had not died for you, and saved you by His death, neither you nor any created power could have done so."

He was of great value too in the University, where so many young men were attending his lectures. "He refuted the error," said Melancthon afterwards, "then prominent in the church and schools that men by their own works obtain remission of sins, and are made righteous before God, by an external discipline. . . . He pointed to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

All this, perhaps we think, is now well known; but then it was all newly-recovered truth, that had been hidden away from men for centuries, except as God Himself taught one here and there and saved them by His grace.

Hence we come to see the great work for which God had raised up Luther: it was to bring to light hidden truth, and especially the truth of justification by faith. Man had thought that it was to be obtained by works and by punishing himself. Luther thought so once, and, as we have seen, he nearly killed himself in his endeavours to attain to it. Now he knew better. Now he preached that "sin is pardoned on account of God's Son, and that man receives this blessing through faith."

We have called this recovered truth, and so it was, and Luther saw it to be so. He denied that what he taught was new truth. He said it was in the Bible. "Let any one read that book, and then say whether our theology is a new thing. For that book is not new." The light that God had given Luther was yet to be further spread. He was directed to make a tour and visit certain monasteries, and wherever he went he made known what God had taught him. Among other places he visited Erfurt, where he had formerly opened the doors and swept the church. He had now authority to some extent to reform abuses; and of these he found plenty. He returned with a still deeper sense of the sad state of that which was called the church of God. But if Luther had the light — and he had — it must make manifest what was being done in the surrounding darkness. We shall soon see what a contest this caused.

"What is the world? a wildering maze,
Where sin hath traded ten thousand ways,
Her victims to ensnare;
All broad, and winding, and aslope,
All tempting with perfidious hope,
All ending in despair.
Millions of pilgrims throng these roads,
Bearing their baubles or their loads,
Down to eternal night;
— One only path that never bends,
Narrow, and rough, and steep ascends
From darkness into light.
Is there no guide to shew that path?
The Bible! — he alone who hath
The Bible need not stray;
But he who hath and will not give
That light of life to all that live,
Himself may lose the way.

08 Chapter 8.Sale of Indulgences — A.D. 1517.

Chapter 8.

Sale of Indulgences — A.D. 1517. In the year 1517 there was a great commotion in Germany. Certain persons were sent round the country from town to town to sell indulgences. It was done with pomp. Messengers were sent on to the magistrates of any town they visited, to announce the approach of the delegate from the pope. The monks, nuns, schoolmasters, etc., turned out to welcome the messenger, who, with flags flying, amid the pealing of the bells, was escorted to the church. Before him was carried his authority from the pope. In the church they put up a large cross, to which they attached the pope's heraldic arms.

One of those who conducted these sales was more famous than others because he effected more sales. His name was Tetzel, and he was now making his tour in Germany. He entered the pulpits, and addressed the people who flocked in great numbers to the church. Let us hear what he says.

"Indulgences are the most precious and sublime of God's gifts. . . . Draw near, and I will give you letters duly sealed, by which even the sins you shall hereafter desire to commit shall be all forgiven you. There is no sin so great that the indulgence cannot remit it."

Tetzel told them that these indulgences were not only good for the living, but they would also purchase forgiveness for the dead. Would they let their departed parents and friends abide in torment?

"The very moment," said he, "that the money clinks against the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory and flies free to heaven."

"O senseless people, and almost like to beasts, who do not comprehend the grace so richly offered! This day, heaven is on all sides open. Do you now refuse to enter? When then do you intend to come in? . . . In the day of judgment my conscience will be clear: but you will be punished the more severely for neglecting so great a salvation. I protest that though you should have only one coat, you ought to strip it off and sell it, to purchase this grace. Our Lord God no longer deals with us as God. He has given all power to the pope."

Thus spoke the seller of indulgences. One shudders to write such horrible profanity, but it is necessary for the reader to know what was practised by the church of Rome, that he may shun it as he would the most deadly disease: yea, more; the disease may ruin the body, but this heresy would ruin the soul.

Thus, for money they gave a paper, sealed by the pope's seal, which they pretended would confer on the holder forgiveness either for his past sins or for his future sins: for the living or the dead! On the parchment were drawn large figures calculated to excite imagination and fear, such as the hand of Christ pierced with a nail. The people had to confess their sins, which was soon over, and then they hastened to purchase the indulgence. And here they had to pay according to their rank in life, and according to their income. Indulgences for particular sins could also be purchased.

Tetzel charged for perjury nine ducats, and for murder eight.

Only think of the crime of murder being forgiven (as they said) for less than £4! Could there possibly be a more solemn mockery and delusion to souls?*

{* Tetzel gave a murderer a note on which were written these words: "As I have the calling of saving all souls, and that N. N. has paid me what he ought, I declare him absolved from his crime, in virtue of the ability conferred upon me by the holy father, and I order everybody, ecclesiastics and laity, under pain of excommunication, not to follow up N. N. because of his murder, but to look upon him as entirely absolved."} The money came in freely. It was counted in the presence of a public notary and duly registered. It was being collected, they said, for repairing the Cathedral of St. Peter's at Rome. This crying evil was one of the first with which Luther had to contend. It is easily to be seen that if forgiveness of sins was to be bought with money, there was an end at once of all need of the gospel of the grace of God. But Luther was quite clear that forgiveness was only to be had through faith in the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore this sale of indulgences could be nothing but a lie and a cheat. "A monstrous traffic in the church," said Luther, "presumes to take the place of redemption through Jesus It was Himself that He gave — Himself. . . . And a wretched mountebank dares, with bellowing voice, to tender his abominable licenses in the stead of Jesus Christ but, God willing, I'll beat a hole in his drum." The good sense of the people in a measure opened their eyes to the fraud. "How is it," said they, "if the pope has really the power to forgive sins, that he allows any to be lost? Will he for the sake of money allow any to die unforgiven?" Still, there was much need of money, and the traffic went on under the stirring appeals of Tetzel. To cover appearances Tetzel once posted on the church doors that at Easter indulgences would be granted to the poor gratuitously and for the love of God. This was at Annaberg in Saxony, and among Tetzel's hearers was young Myconius. He had been taught by his father that "the blood of Christ is the only ransom for the sins of the world," and that "all things are freely given to us by God alone." Now that the indulgences were to be given, he would go and get one. "I am a poor sinner," said he, "and I need a free pardon." "Those only can share in the merits of Christ who stretch forth a helping hand to the church that is, give their money," said the indulgence sellers. Myconius asked what was meant by the offer of indulgences free that he saw posted up. "Give at least a grosch" (about three half-pence), said they. "I cannot," he said. "Only six deniers" (about a farthing), they plead. "I have not even so much," said Myconius. "Listen," said they, "we will give you six deniers." On this Myconius replied with indignation, "I will have none of the indulgences that are bought and sold. If I desired to purchase them I should only have to sell one of my books. What I want is a free pardon, and for love of God. You will have to account to God for having for the sake of six deniers missed the salvation of a soul;" for he believed in the efficacy of indulgences. "Ah, ah," said they, "who sent you to tempt us?" "No one," said Myconius; "the desire of receiving the grace of God could alone induce me to appear before such great lords."

He left without his indulgence. Their offer of them free had not been real. But he remembered what his father had taught him, and he said afterwards that "As I left these people, the Holy Spirit touched my heart. I burst into tears, and, with sighs and groans, I prayed to the Lord: 'O God, since these men have refused remission of sins because I had no money to pay; do thou, Lord, take pity on me, and forgive them in mere mercy.' I felt converted, transformed. What had before delighted me was now distasteful. To live with God, and to please Him, became my most

ardent, my single desire." In his case the refusal of an indulgence sent him to God, where he found both pardon and peace without money and without price. He became a Reformer and a friend of Melancthon. At another place the wife of a shoemaker bought an indulgence, and soon afterwards she died. It was the custom then for the surviving relatives to have prayers or a mass said for the dead, the payment for which helped to support the clergy. Well, in this case it was noticed that the husband did not ask for prayers or a mass, and he was summoned by the curate before the judge for contempt of religion.

"Is your wife dead?" asked the judge.

"Yes," said the husband.

"What have you done for her?"

"I buried her, and commended her soul to God."

"But have you not had a mass said for the salvation of her soul?"

"I have not: it was not necessary. She went to heaven at the moment of her death."

"How do you know that?" The husband produced the indulgence, and there sure enough it was stated that the woman at death would not go into purgatory, but would go straight to heaven.

"If the curate pretends," said the shoemaker, "that after that a mass is necessary, my wife has been cheated by our holy father the pope; but if she has not been cheated, then the curate is deceiving me." Such an argument was unanswerable. The shoemaker was acquitted.

Others turned the sale of indulgences into ridicule. A Saxon gentleman who heard Tetzels preaching at Leipsic went to him and asked if he could grant an indulgence for a sin he wanted to commit. "Certainly," said Tetzels; "I have full power from the pope to do so." Mark this reply. This was not simply a forgiveness; it was more strictly an indulgence — a liberty to commit sin! Can anything be conceived to be more horrible or further from godliness? "Well," said the gentleman, "I want to take some slight revenge on one of my enemies, without attempting his life. I will pay you ten crowns if you will give me a letter of indulgence that shall bear me harmless." This was too good an opportunity for Tetzels to let slip. Yes, he would do it, but not for ten crowns, he wanted much more than that. They struck their bargain at thirty crowns (about £3 15s.). The gentleman got his indulgence and went his way. Soon after, Tetzels left Leipsic. In passing through a wood between Juterbock and Treblin a body of men surrounded him and his party, gave him a beating, and carried off the chest of money paid for indulgences. Tetzels was indignant, and brought an action before the judges. The gentleman who had bought the above indulgence (for it was he and his servants, who had attacked Tetzels) produced it in court. The indulgence bore the signature of Tetzels himself, holding the bearer harmless. What could the judges say? Duke George was very angry when the case was reported to him, but when the document was produced he ordered the accused to be set at liberty. It appeared to be a joke, and was perhaps so intended; but it was a great deal more. Here was a man who had authority from the pope to give permission for any one to sin, and to go unpunished both in this world and in the world to come! If Tetzels had lost his life in the affray, would he not have paid the just penalty of his profanity? As an instance of the shameful way in which the poor people were deluded and imposed upon, the following is recorded. Tetzels had been at Zwickau with his indulgences, but was about to leave, when the chaplains and their

subordinates begged him to give them a farewell repast. Tetzel was nothing loth, but unfortunately the money was already counted and sealed up. But they should not go without their feast, so in the morning he had the big bell tolled; people ran to the church, supposing something important had happened. "I had intended," said Tetzel, "to take my departure this morning, but last night I was awaked by groans. I listened: they proceeded from the cemetery. Alas! it was a poor soul that called me and entreated to be delivered from the torment that consumed it. I have therefore tarried one day longer that I might move christian hearts to compassion for this unhappy soul. Myself will be the first to contribute, but he who will not follow my example will be worthy of all condemnation." Who could turn away from such an appeal? They knew not but that that soul was one of their relatives. The gifts were readily given, and Tetzel and his friends sat down to the feast thus provided for them by the poor of Zwickau!

How the question of the sale of indulgences came practically before Luther was as follows. It is the habit in the church of Rome for persons to go to the priest, and confess their sins. The priest, according to the nature of the sin, demands penance; and then on their complying he gives them absolution, or declares them forgiven. Well, it so happened that Tetzel in his tour came near to Wittenberg, and many went from thence and bought his indulgences. Some of these afterwards came to confess to Luther, who still acted as priest. He demanded of them repentance. But they said, No, they need do no penance, because they had purchased an indulgence. He told them plainly it was all a delusion, and he insisted on their ceasing to do evil, or he could not absolve them.

They hastened back to Tetzel, and told him that a monk had treated his letters with contempt. Tetzel was much enraged, and, to strike terror into the hearts of the people, he caused fires to be made in the streets and declared he had orders to burn the heretics who should oppose his work.

Thus was Luther fairly brought into conflict with the church of Rome. He did not wish it, but he could not see the people misled and cheated, and give his sanction to it. He believed God had called him to "defend the truth of the gospel," and he must speak out. He preached a sermon against indulgences, and plainly told the people they ought not to buy them. But he must do more. He drew up ninety-five propositions, called "theses* against indulgences," and on a feast-day when there were great crowds flocking into Wittenberg, he nailed them to the church doors. We can give only one or two of them. They were in the rough style common to the age.

{* In Greek and Latin thesis, a position, from the Greek tithemi, to set. It is that which is set down as a proposition affirmed or denied.}

"Those who fancy themselves sure of their salvation by indulgences will go to the devil with those who teach them this doctrine."

"The true and precious treasure of the church is the holy gospel of the glory and the grace of God."

These theses soon attracted attention, and a crowd collected round the church doors. One who got near read them aloud clause by clause, and as he read the people freely made their remarks. Some called out "True, true;" others exclaimed "Heresy, heresy." Thus were men's minds stirred up and the question of indulgences was fairly discussed. But the theses were not only put up at the door of the church, they were printed, and those who had flocked to Wittenberg on the feast-day returned with a copy of Luther's theses, and they soon became known, and spread all

over the country and to Rome in a few days, causing a great commotion wherever they went. Who was this that presumed to call in question what the pope was doing by his agents? It was a poor monk, but a monk led on by God. The theses were by many hailed with delight. They had sighed over the gross abuses of the traffic, but had not dared to speak out: they rejoiced that some one had the courage to do so.

Others, who did not condemn them, were alarmed; Frederick the Elector was very uneasy. Luther was in his dominions, and who could tell where such a fire once kindled might not spread to? The bishop wrote to him, begging him not to write any more on the subject. The heads of his own monastery came to his cell and entreated him not to bring disgrace upon their order. Luther's answer was noble: "Dear fathers, if the thing is not of God, it will come to nought; if it is, let it go forward." They were silent. To others who greatly blamed him he wrote, "If the work is of God, who shall stop it? If it is not, who can forward it? Not my will, not theirs, not ours; but Thy will, Thine, holy Father, who art in heaven."

Still so many and so loud were the reproaches cast upon Luther that for a time his heart failed him. He had hoped the truth of his theses would have commended them to many; but the few who at first commended them were soon silent, and nothing was heard but the reproaches of the opposers. He tells us of his fear and trembling. Who was he to be in contest with the authority of the church? He was greatly dejected — almost in despair.

Tetzel took up the controversy in a formal manner. He first answered Luther's sermon, and then issued some counter-theses against those of Luther. We give three of them.

"Christians should be taught that they should place more dependence in matters of faith on the Pope's judgment, expressed in his decrees, than on the unanimous opinions of all the learned, resting merely on the interpretation of scripture."

"Christians should be taught that the judgment of the pope, in things pertaining to christian doctrine and necessary to the salvation of mankind, can in no case err."

"Christians should be taught, that there are many things which the church regards as certain articles of the catholic faith, although they are not found either in the inspired scriptures or in the early Fathers."

Nothing can be more destructive of the faith than to insist that the pope cannot err, and to set his judgment above and independent of scripture. Yet this doctrine they plainly put forth. But Tetzel would not be put down. He had a scaffold erected, and after preaching against Luther, and declaring "the heretic ought to be burnt alive," he cast his theses and sermon on to the scaffold and set them on fire.

After this Tetzel employed persons to distribute his own theses over the country and a number of copies were sent to Wittenberg. The students of the University loved Luther, and no sooner did they hear of the arrival of the messenger than they surrounded him, and by fair means or foul possessed themselves of all his copies — about eight hundred. They then posted bills saying that the theses would be burnt publicly in the market place at two o'clock. At that hour crowds came together, and amid exclamations of joy the papers were burnt. This was done altogether without Luther's consent, and he much regretted the act. It helped to widen the breach.

Luther was next attacked from Rome itself. Sylvester Prierias, master of the pontifical palace, wrote an attack against Luther. It most shamelessly set the teaching of the Roman church and of the pope above scripture.

Luther could not be silent when the scripture was thus contemned. He saw the pith of the whole controversy lay now in a small compass; it was, Is scripture to have the first place, or is the church and the pope? Luther exalted the scripture, and quoted from Galatians i. 8: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." He closed with these words, "What if I were to lose my life? Christ still lives; Christ my Lord, and the Lord of all, blessed for ever. Amen."

Luther was afterwards attacked by Dr. Eck,* who hitherto had been his friend. This grieved Luther much, and he desired to be silent, but his friends constrained him to reply.

{* Dr. Eck was well known among the learned of Germany. He was a doctor of theology and chancellor of the University of Ingoldstadt; but his theology was that of the schools, and not of the Bible.} In the year 1518 there was to be a general meeting of the order of the Augustines held at Heidelberg,* and Luther was invited. His friends strongly advised him not to go, fearing he would fall into the hands of his enemies, but Luther would not allow himself to be hindered from any path of duty. Here was a means of spreading the truth, and he must go. He arrived safely, and in order to bring before his brethren the questions then agitating the church he drew up some propositions (which he called "paradoxes") for public discussion. We give two or three.

{*An ancient city in Baden, situated on the left bank of the Neckar.}

"Man is not justified who does many works; but he who, without having yet done works, has much faith in Christ."

"The law says, 'Do this,' and what it enjoins is never done: grace says, 'Believe in Him,' and immediately all is perfected."

"The love of God finds nothing in man, but creates in him what He loves. Man's love is the gift of His well beloved."

Five doctors replied to Luther, but with moderation; all were interested and listened with attention, some were certainly helped and blessed. The truth was spreading. Seeds were then sown which sprang up after Luther had returned to Wittenberg. Among those who benefited by this discussion was Martin Bucer, who afterwards took a prominent place among the Reformers.

09 Chapter 9. Luther in Conflict with Rome — A.D. 1518.

Chapter 9.

Luther in Conflict with Rome — A.D. 1518.

After Luther's return from Heidelberg he thought well to revise his original theses to make them clearer, and to modify some. These new theses he called his "solutions." In some parts he was very bold. Thus he spoke of the pope: "I care little what pleases or displeases the pope. He is a man like other men." True words, but they must have sounded strange indeed to those who held the pope to be infallible.

He spoke of Christ thus: "It is impossible for a man to be a Christian without having Christ; and if he has Christ, he has, at the same time, all that is in Christ." True words; but they must have surprised those who held that no one could be saved without the absolution of the priest. When Luther had completed his "solutions" he sent a copy of them to the pope, with a letter stating what had stirred him up to action. But while Luther had been thus engaged, Rome had been preparing silently to attack him. A message was sent to the Elector Frederick requesting him to cease to protect Luther, at the same time alluding to the fidelity of the Elector to the church. A diet was then being held by the Emperor* Maximilian at Augsburg, to which all the German States sent their representatives. The Emperor wished his grandson Charles (who was already king of Spain and Naples) to be proclaimed king of the Romans, and to be his successor as Emperor. Most of the Electors had agreed to the wish of the Emperor, but Frederick thought it wrong and would not yield. This offended the Emperor, who then to gain over the pope (who was also opposed to his scheme) wrote to him against Luther, promising to carry out anything the pope might order to be done in the matter.

{* Germany was governed at that time by 1. An Emperor chosen by the Electors. 2. Ecclesiastical Electors: 1, Archbishop of Mentz; 2, Archbishop of Treves; 3, Archbishop of Cologne. All these were arch-chancellors. 3. Secular Electors: 1, King of Bohemia, arch-cupbearer; 2, Elector of Bavaria, arch-carver; 3, Elector of Saxony, arch-marshal; 4, Elector of Brandenburg, arch-chamberlain; 5, Elector Palatine of the Rhine, arch-treasurer. 4. The princes of the empire, divided into spiritual and temporal. They each had a vote in the diet. 5. The prelates, abbots, and abbesses: the counts and nobles: each had a vote. 6. The free Imperial cities each had a vote.

Each state was governed by its own sovereign; he being Elector, duke, prince or bishop as the case might be. The diets had the levying of taxes; enacting laws; declaring war; concluding peace. The Emperor could refuse his ratification, but could not modify the decisions of the diet. On August 6, 1806, the Emperor Francis II. abdicated the imperial crown of Germany, and declared the dissolution of the Germanic empire.} The Elector also wrote to the pope, telling him that Luther was ready to defend himself before learned men, and to submit to their decision.

Luther was quietly going on with his duties at Wittenberg, waiting to hear the result of his letter to the pope, when on August 7 he received an order to proceed to Rome. Luther had looked for a

blessing, but he was to be devoured, while Tetzal escaped. How could it be otherwise when the friends of the pope had set Tetzal to work?

All Wittenberg was in consternation. If Luther went to Rome it was clear he would never leave it alive; and if he refused to go, he was denying the authority of the pope, which all then held to be supreme. On the next day Luther wrote to Spalatin,* asking him to use his influence with the Elector to have his hearing fixed for some place in Germany instead of going to Rome. The University of Wittenberg also wrote to the pope, begging the same favour.

{* George Spalatin, a man of wisdom and candour, was chosen by Frederick as his private secretary and chaplain, and teacher of his nephew John Frederick. Because of his excellent spirit he was made a confidant by the Elector. He was gained over to the truth, and became a staunch friend of Luther.}

Now the pope had been pleased with the Elector's refusing to sanction the scheme of the Emperor as to his grandson, and therefore he could well afford to please the Elector by letting Luther's case be tried in Germany instead of Rome. Thus we see how political and worldly matters were interwoven with matters touching the question whether Luther should continue to preach the truth or not, but God was overruling all. On the 23rd of August the pope signed the order for Luther to be heard in Germany before his Legate. In this order Luther, unless he recanted, was to be seized and carried to Rome. But Luther did not know this until afterwards.

Just at this time there came to Wittenberg a thin young man to be a professor at the University. All were disappointed at his appearance, but his eloquence and his learning soon won him many friends, and among them none formed so lasting a friendship with him as Luther. This young man was Philip Melanchthon.*

{* Melanchthon's name was really Philip Schwarzerd, and D'Aubigné tells us that Reuchlin was so taken with Philip when a lad that he changed his name from Schwarzerd to Melanchthon. "Both words signify black earth, the one in German, the other in Greek. Most of the learned men of those times translated their names into Greek or Latin."} The two men were in some things the very opposite. An historian has compared Luther to the positive, and Melanchthon to the negative agents in electricity. Luther was energetic and headstrong at times; Melanchthon was timid and gentle. They helped each other amazingly. Luther spurred on Melanchthon; Melanchthon restrained Luther.

Melanchthon was the very man Luther needed for other work. He was a much better Greek scholar than Luther, and Luther had been engaged in translating the New Testament into German, and now he had a companion who could give him very valuable assistance. With Melanchthon's help the work proceeded. But this sweet and blessed labour was soon to be interrupted. A summons arrived for Luther to appear at Augsburg* and answer for himself. His friends were greatly alarmed. One and another wrote to him begging him not to venture on the journey. And Count Albert of Mansfeldt sent a message for him not to go, because certain nobles had bound themselves by an oath to waylay and murder him.

{* Augsburg is situated in a beautiful plain near the confluence of the Lech and the Werlach. It is now incorporated with the kingdom of Bavaria.}

Luther could not be moved. He said, "They have already torn to pieces my honour and my good name. All I have left is my wretched body. Let them have it: they will but shorten my life by a few hours." Confiding in God, he set out on foot. From Wittenberg he went to Weimar; thence to Nuremberg. From here Link, preacher of Nuremberg, and Leonard an Augustine monk, determined to accompany Luther to Augsburg. To whom shall we turn, O Lord, But to Thyself on high? Men threaten Thy work to mar, To Thee for help we fly. A present God Thou wilt be, Each step along the way; In ev'ry storm that can come A shelter and a stay. O give us strong faith to live In faithfulness to Thee; To lean on Thy strength, O Lord, And conquerors we shall be.

10 Chapter 10.Luther at Augsburg — A.D. 1518.

Chapter 10.

Luther at Augsburg — A.D. 1518. On the 7th of October, Luther arrived and at once sent to the pope's Legate* — by name Thomas De Vio, surnamed Cajetan, a cardinal of the church — notice of his arrival. He also sent to his friend Staupitz.

{* "Legate" is from Lego, to send: it means one sent by another, as an ambassador or representative.} On the next day a stranger visited Luther — he came from Cajetan to "sound" Luther. His name was Serra Longa. He was a wily Italian, and hoped to have the credit of bringing Luther to recant. But Luther said he must be proved to be wrong, and unless they could do that he would not submit; but if they could prove him wrong he would be humble and obedient. With this, Serra Longa left him, full of hope. But the friends, to whom the Elector Frederick had commended Luther, now came to him and persuaded him that it would be madness on his part to appear before the Legate before he had obtained from the Emperor a safe-conduct.* Luther said he did not think it necessary, but they insisted and set to work to obtain it.

{* A "safe-conduct" is a warrant of security granted by the sovereign of a country, to prevent the holder thereof being seized or molested.} In the mean time Serra Longa returned to him with the message, "Come, the cardinal is waiting for you," and then he told Luther how to behave in the cardinal's presence. "You must prostrate yourself with your face to the ground. When he tells you to rise you must kneel before him; and you must not stand erect till he orders you to do so. Remember it is before a prince of the church you are about to appear." Alas! surely the apostle Paul would not have required or allowed such degradation from a fellow Christian! If the Legate required this, what would the pope want?

Luther refused to go without the safe-conduct, because of the advice of his friends. The next day was Sunday. On the Monday Serra Longa came again, declaring Luther had nothing to fear. A word of six letters, said he, would settle all. That word was Revoca, Latin for retract. But that was just what Luther could not say unless they proved him wrong.

"Where will you take refuge when all forsake you?" said Serra Longa.

"Under heaven," said Luther, looking upwards. At length the safe-conduct arrived, and Luther appeared before the Legate. The reception was cold in the extreme, though Luther followed his instructions of falling, kneeling, and standing.

Luther broke the silence by saying that he appeared at the request of the pope, and the desire of his prince the Elector. The Cardinal determined to assume a kind tone. He said, "My dear son, you have filled all Germany with commotion by your dispute concerning indulgences." He then told Luther that he must retract his error; must abstain from spreading his opinions, and must not again disturb the peace of the church.

Luther asked to be permitted to see the writing of the pope that appointed the cardinal to hear him. This request greatly astonished Serra Longa and the many other Italians with him. They were so used to see persons filled with fear before the pope's legates that the boldness of Luther greatly astonished them.

De Vio told Luther he could not see the pope's brief.

"Deign then," said Luther, "to inform me wherein I have erred."

Again the Italians stared in astonishment. De Vio said, "My beloved son, there are two propositions put forward by you which you must before all retract. 1st, 'The treasure of indulgences does not consist of the merits and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 2nd, 'The man who receives the holy sacrament must have faith in the grace offered to him.'"

De Vio said he would prove them wrong from scripture; yet did not attempt that, but quoted what certain persons in the church had said.

Luther objected.

"The pope has authority and power over all things," said De Vio.

"Save the scriptures," said Luther.

They then came to the second point, the necessity of faith. On this Luther was very firm. "I will not yield that point, and by God's help I will hold to it to the end."

"You must this very day retract that very article," said De Vio, . . . "or I will proceed to reject and condemn all your doctrine."

"I have no will but the Lord's," said Luther. "He will do with me what seemeth good in His sight. But had I a hundred heads I would rather lose them all than retract the testimony I have borne to the holy christian faith."

"I am not come here to argue with you," replied De Vio. "Retract, or prepare to endure the punishment you have deserved."

Luther saw it was no use continuing the discussion, and thought it best to answer in writing. "Do you wish," said De Vio, "that I should give you a safe-conduct to Rome?"

Luther took care to decline this. It would have been putting his head in the lion's mouth. He left the hall. On his reaching his lodging he was agreeably surprised to find his friend Staupitz had arrived. He advised Luther to answer in writing.

Staupitz, who was Vicar-General of the order of Augustines, proposed to Luther to disconnect him from that fellowship. This was for two reasons; one, that if Luther was condemned, it would save disgrace to the whole; and secondly, if the cardinal commanded Staupitz to insist on Luther's silence, he could now say that he had no control over him. On the next day, again Luther appeared before the Cardinal. The Elector had sent two of his councillors — the knight Philip Von Feilitzsch and Dr. Ruhel — with instructions for them to see well after the safety of Luther.

Luther had written out his answer. He read, "What I have taught, I, to this hour, regard as right, true, and christian. Nevertheless I am but a man, and I may be mistaken. I am therefore willing to be instructed and corrected wherever I may have erred. . . . But I solemnly protest against . . . that strange assumption which would oblige me to retract, without having convicted me of error."

"My dear friend," said De Vio, "I beseech you to abandon this useless design retract: such is the pope's will. Whether it be your will or not matters little."

Luther said plainly "I cannot retract."

De Vio, however, would not let it appear that he could not refute Luther, especially before the respectable witnesses then present; so he began to talk, and argue, and quote opinions of others as fast as he could, without giving Luther the least opportunity to reply. Again and again Luther tried to speak, but on went the Cardinal as fast as ever. Staupitz now begged him to allow Luther to speak; but he would not, on he went with his harangue.

Luther saw it was no use attempting to reply, and at length he begged that he might be permitted to reply in writing. Luther's friends joined in the request, and at length the Cardinal consented.

He carefully prepared his answer. Luther denied that "the treasure of indulgences is the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints," which the Roman Catholics maintained.* Neither could indulgences consist in the merits of Christ alone; for they excused men from good works; whereas God quickened us to perform them.

{* They hold that this "treasure of indulgences" is given into the power of the pope, by which he can remit the punishment due to sin.} On the second point, he maintained that there could be no justification but by faith. This was really Luther's great theme; nay more, his one great work was, as we have seen, to bring out clearly the truth of justification by faith. Therefore he could by no means give up faith. His opponents held that it was by works, and penances, indulgences, absolutions, and anything and almost everything but faith. Now Luther declared it was by faith alone.

One might perhaps ask, Why all this ado about one man preaching this truth. Why? The reason is that it entirely destroyed their system. If justification is by faith in Christ, there was no need of indulgences; and if there was no need of indulgences, there was no money coming for them. Besides it told in another way. If scripture was the first and last appeal as to what is truth, then the pope lost his influence, for he must be judged by the scripture the same as any other man. This will account for why Luther could not be permitted to go on. In a word, he must be put down and silenced, or the pope and the whole system would be shaken to the foundation. Therefore De Vio must not give up the contest easily. The Cardinal read Luther's reply, but told him that it was all in vain — he must retract.

Luther then shewed the Cardinal that even the constitution of pope Clement VI. did not say what the catholics said it did, and in which they boasted. But it was all to no purpose. The Cardinal only called out "Retract, retract."

Luther asked that his reply might be sent to the pope. This caused a moment's respite, when the Cardinal exclaimed, "Retract, or return no more."

Luther was struck with the words "return no more." He bowed and retired.

Peace filled his soul. By God's grace he had stood firm to the truth; he could leave results to God. Apart from this inward peace there was indeed enough to trouble him. All sorts of rumours were being reported to him, some declaring that if he did not retract he was to be seized and thrown into prison. But he trusted in God, and was at rest. The Cardinal, on the other hand, was much disturbed. He saw no way out of the difficulty, and he was now sorry that he had not used milder means with Luther. So he sent off a messenger for Staupitz. "Try now," said De Vio to the Vicar-General, "to prevail upon your monk and induce him to retract. Really I am pleased with him on the whole, and he has no better friend than myself."

"I have already used my endeavours," said Staupitz, "and I will now again advise him humbly to submit to the church."

"You must give him," said De Vio, "proper answers from the scriptures."

"I must confess that that is beyond my power," replied Staupitz.

Staupitz then returned to Luther and begged him to make some concession.

"Refute the scripture I have brought forward," urged Luther.

"That is beyond my power," confessed Staupitz.

"Very well," replied Luther, "my conscience will not allow me to retract."

Luther then wrote to the Elector through Spalatin, "I have neither hope nor confidence in the Legate. I am resolved not to retract a single syllable."

He also wrote to Wittenberg, telling them the state of affairs; and stating how peaceful he felt amidst it all, feeling that his cause was that of "the faith of Jesus Christ, and of the grace of God," adding the memorable words, "I seem to feel that prayer is being made for me." The Cardinal had promised to send to Luther in writing, stating definitely what he requested him to retract. As this did not arrive, Luther asked Dr. Link to visit the Cardinal. He did so, and found that the Cardinal had despatched Luther's answer to Rome by a swift messenger, and he was waiting the messenger's return.

These tidings filled the friends of Luther with alarm: they feared they would all be seized and imprisoned. Staupitz and Link left the town, and travelled by different routes, leaving poor Luther in the jaws of the lion as they feared. The next day Luther did not hear from the Cardinal, so he wrote a humble letter to him, confessing that he had not conducted his case so meekly as he might have done. He asked that his cause might be submitted to the pope, for the church to decide what was to be retracted. To this letter Luther received no reply, and his friends strongly urged Luther to draw up an appeal to the pope, and leave the town. For four days he had waited uselessly, he therefore resolved to write the Cardinal another letter, telling him that he should leave the place, reminding him of his orders to retract or not to appear in his presence again. This letter was not to be delivered to the Cardinal till after Luther had left. He also wrote an appeal to the pope which a friend promised to have posted up at the door of the Cathedral two or three days after his departure.

Thus all was prepared, and early before daybreak (being urged by his friends to use every precaution) he mounted a horse brought to the monastery without boots, spurs, or sword. Accompanied by a mounted guide, they proceeded in the dark through the city. An official, named Lange-mantel, had ordered one of the gates to be opened for them. They passed quietly through and were free. Once out of the city, they put spurs to their horses and were soon out of sight. When the Cardinal heard of Luther's departure, he was greatly incensed. He had hoped to have brought the matter to some sort of a conclusion, but now all his expectations were banished. That Luther had thus escaped filled the Italians with rage. Such a thing as a monk being brought before a prince of the church, and not being humbled, or condemned, had never before been heard of. The Roman Catholic church was powerful in those days; but God and His truth were more powerful. This fact they had not yet learned. To buy the truth and sell it not, Is God's own word to us; He freely sells, and sells to all, Though empty be their purse. Come buy the wine and milk, He says, Without a price or cost: Why buy ye that which is not bread, By which your toil is lost? Yet truth God gives, for it is far Too precious to be bought: It cost our Lord His life, and now To us with life is fraught. Then let us keep it — sell it not, It is of heavenly birth: To Him we owe our lives, ourselves, And all we have of worth.

11 Chapter 11.Luther and Miltitz — A.D. 1518.

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Luther and Miltitz — A.D. 1518.

Luther on his journey home saw a copy of the brief of the pope to the Cardinal in which he saw that he was already judged by Rome and condemned; and that the Cardinal had orders, unless Luther recanted, to seize and carry him to Rome. He was naturally filled with indignation, and he saw at once the great danger he had run. It was indeed God who had protected him. The Cardinal next wrote to the Elector, giving his version of the conference, and requesting the Elector to send Luther to Rome, or at least to banish him from his dominions. The Elector sent this letter on to Luther. It filled him with the utmost indignation. He was to be condemned without being proved to be wrong. To know this was necessary for Luther, and was blessed of God. He had fondly hoped that when errors had been pointed out, the rulers of the church would have rejected them. He had yet to learn that they deliberately chose error and rejected the truth. Luther had learnt a good portion of truth: he had yet to learn what the church of Rome was. This he was learning by degrees. This letter before him was to this end. He saw that at all cost he was to be condemned, right or wrong, to save the church. This stirred up his spirit and revived his courage. He wrote to the Elector, begging him not to send him to Rome. To banishment he would go if the Elector wished it. The Elector wrote to the Cardinal, and told him plainly that it was unreasonable to expect Luther would retract until he had been shewn to be wrong. He also declined to send him to Rome or to banish him from his dominions.

Luther proceeded to draw up a report of the conference, that all might judge how matters stood. He felt sure that things could not rest as they were. A storm would surely be raised, and it might burst on him at any moment; so he set his house in order, ready to depart into banishment at any time if that was his path. But he was full of courage. "Having tucked up my gown and girded up my loins," said he, "I am ready . . . God is everywhere." His thoughts turned to France. A storm was brewing, and Luther was given to understand from the Elector that he had better leave Wittenberg. He prepared to go, but previously he called around him all his friends to a farewell repast. They met, and were enjoying each other's friendship, when a letter was brought in haste to Luther. It was from the court, asking why he was so long in going. All were filled with dismay. They could speak but little: they sat and wept. Still he felt his path was now to leave, but whither could he go? "Commend my soul to Christ," said Luther to his friends. While still lost in deep concern and thoughtfulness another letter was brought. He need not go. There was a new envoy from the pope, and he hoped all could be arranged.

Luther now published the report of the conference at Augsburg. The Elector had sent to ask him not to issue it, but the request came too late. Luther summed it up thus: "What a new, what an amazing crime to seek after light and truth!" This was judged to be a crime in those days; for the Catholic church would best flourish in error and darkness.

Luther saw clearly that nothing was to be gained from the pope, and instead of the matter being soon settled, he foresaw that the battle between truth and error had not more than begun; so, though he still styled the pope "God's Vicar on earth," he formally appealed from the decision of the pope to a general council of the church. This was on November 28, 1518. The matter must no longer remain a question between Luther and the pope; but the whole Catholic church must have the truth presented to it, and choose either that or error. The pope however would not quietly let the settling of the question slip out of his own hands, so he despatched a new representative to Germany, who was to try and bring Luther to terms, or he was to bring him to Rome. For this latter purpose he was furnished with seventy "Bulls"* to post up in the various towns he passed through, so as to overcome all and prevent any from taking Luther's part. This new Legate was Miltitz, chamberlain to the pope, and canon of Mayence. Being a Saxon by birth, great hopes were placed in him to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion. How little they understood that between truth and error — between light and darkness — there could be no agreement and no fellowship.

{*" Bull" is from the Italian bolla, a bubble, blister, seal, or stamp; or from the French bulle, Latin bulla, a boss and ornament on the neck. This name was given to the seal appended to the edicts or briefs of the pope, and in process of time was applied to the brief itself.}

Miltitz laid his plans discreetly. He heard such complaints against Tetzal that he summoned him into his presence; but the poor fellow (who had for some time been obliged to give up his traffic in indulgences) was afraid to come, though he made as an excuse that he was afraid of the adherents of Luther.

Miltitz hastened to have an interview with Luther; and by soft speeches they were enabled to draw up a paper, agreeing to:

1. Both sides were to be silent on the subjects in dispute.
2. A bishop was to investigate the matter, to point out the errors to Luther, who promised to retract them, and never more do anything to "lessen the honour or authority of the holy Roman church." As we said before, Luther had received a large measure of truth but he had yet to learn what that church was to which he was attached. This he had not yet learned, or he never would have signed any such paper as that. As yet he was the servant of Rome.

Miltitz was delighted at his success, he invited Luther to a repast, where he appeared very friendly, and he kissed Luther at parting. Luther feared lest it might be "a Judas' kiss."

After all there was no real progress made in the matter. A bishop was to convince Luther; and if so, Luther was to retract. The battle had not yet been fought; it was only postponed.

Miltitz then proceeded to Leipsic, where he summoned Tetzal before him, and severely rebuked him, declaring that he had been the cause of all the evil. Thus the poor wretch who had served the church so zealously was now condemned. It was also proved that he had robbed the church of large sums of money; and in thorough disgrace he died in misery shortly afterwards.

Just about this time the Emperor Maximilian died, and the Elector of Saxony took the management of affairs until a new emperor could be appointed. This turned the current of events. The pope must now be friendly to the Elector, in the hope that he would oppose the election of the king of Naples as emperor. And for the time being Luther must be let alone, rather than give offence to the

Elector.

Luther now began to study the Decretals of the popes.* This was of value to him, because these decretals gave him great insight into the sayings and doings of the popes. He was surprised, grieved, and confounded at what he read; and at length was obliged to ask himself if the pope were not Antichrist or at least his apostle.

{* This is a collection of the decrees of the various popes: it forms a part of the canon law of the Romish church.}

Miltitz discovered that he had not really obtained any victory over Luther, and he therefore laid a plan to decoy him into the states of the Archbishop of Treves under the pretence of the Archbishop's investigating his cause. Here he would be away from the control of the Elector Frederick, and could be dealt with as they thought proper.

Luther wisely declined to go, giving various reasons, without positively refusing. Just at this juncture Miltitz and De Vio repaired to Frederick, and announced to him that "the Golden Rose"* had arrived, a present from the pope to himself; which they hoped would be a favourable time to influence Frederick against Luther. But Frederick had now supreme power, and cared but little for the pope or his nuncios. The Archbishop too had reasons for not offending Frederick, and therefore he did not press his request; and so they agreed to let the matter rest until the next Diet.

{* "The Golden Rose" was deemed to represent the body of Jesus Christ. One was consecrated each year by the pope, and was given to one of the leading princes or rulers of the countries attached to the Roman Catholic religion. It was considered a great favour to receive one.}

While they waited for the Diet, the truth was rapidly spreading. Luther's writings were printed and reprinted and sold by thousands over England, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy and Spain. At this time there were but very few Bibles and Testaments, and people knew but little of their contents except what was read in the churches, and what was told them by the priests. Those were indeed days of darkness and error; and in every place where the writings of Luther came they were hailed with delight. Though not faultless in many respects, yet they contained a great deal of truth — and especially that truth, that great truth, that sinful man was to be justified by faith — simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not by works and penances.

12 Chapter 12. Luther and Dr. Eck — A.D. 1519.

Chapter 12.

Luther and Dr. Eck — A.D. 1519. The light and truth was to spread by other means. Dr. Eck took up the controversy at first with Carlstadt, and then with Luther. Both sides had agreed to be silent. Whether Luther was right in promising this is questionable — however he had promised it; but he was to be released from his promise by one of the pope's friends commencing the contest.

Another question was now taken up — a much more delicate one to handle without giving offence. It was no longer the right or wrong of indulgences — it was the power and authority of the pope himself. The Elector was in alarm and indeed all his court; for they could but see it was like stirring up a hornet's nest. Luther was calm and bold. He knew it was God's cause; and it must go on.

It was arranged for a public discussion to be held at Leipsic between Eck and Carlstadt. Leipsic is situated in the dominions of Duke George. Luther wrote to the duke, begging permission to be present and to take part in the discussion. This request the duke would not grant. He might be present as a spectator, but he must be silent. The bishop of the diocese was in great alarm that such a question should be discussed in public, and he entreated the duke not to allow it. But the duke's answer was very cutting: "I am surprised to find a bishop holding in abhorrence the ancient and laudable custom of our fathers to inquire into doubtful questions in matters of faith. If your theologians object to defend their doctrines, the money given them would be better disposed in maintaining old women and children who at least might sew and sing."

Great commotion was caused at Leipsic by the arrival of those who were to take part in the discussion; and the more the theologians tried to stop the discussion, so much the more interest was taken in it by many. The students also were eager for it, already forming themselves into two parties; some for Carlstadt, and some for Eck. No sooner did Eck learn that Luther had arrived than he hastened to him and said, "What is this? I am told you object to dispute with me." Luther told him the duke forbade him. Eck disdained to dispute with Carlstadt; he wanted a more noted champion, for he felt sure of victory. So he hastened off to the duke and begged him to give his permission for Luther to discuss with him. He assured the duke there was nothing to fear; he was sure of victory. The duke consented. The first question was "Man's will previous to his conversion." It was between Eck and Carlstadt. The question really was this — Was man entirely lost in his condition and dead towards God? At length Luther had to enter the lists against Eck, and, as we have said, the question was the supremacy of the pope.

Eck's first assertion was that the church must have a head.

Luther assented, but insisted that that head was Christ, and not the pope.

Eck then appealed to the Fathers; they had supported the pope.

Luther went farther back, and the Fathers then said all had equal rank. The Council of Africa had also said the same.

Eck quoted the passage, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." (Matt. xvi. 18.) St. Augustine had said that the rock was Peter, and the pope was his successor.

Luther shewed that Augustine had also said, and many times, that the rock was Christ. But he had higher authority than Augustine. Scripture said, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. iii. 11.) Peter himself calls Christ the chief corner stone and living rock, on which we are built up a spiritual house. (1 Peter ii. 4, 5.)

Eck was beaten, but not abashed. He resorted to the artful stratagem of alluding to Huss and the Bohemians. Did Luther hold with them?

Luther admitted that the Bohemians in separating "from unity with us" had done wrong. But he was soon sorry for what he had said; for Huss and the Bohemians were right on many points and held the same truths as Luther did. When they next met, Luther at once eased his conscience by admitting that Huss and Wiclif had held some points of truth. No sooner had he said this than nearly the whole hall was in a commotion. Were such arch-heretics as Huss and Wiclif* to be named with approbation in their hearing? The duke, in excitement, exclaimed "He is mad," and from that time he became the enemy of Luther and his work.

{* Wiclif was principal of Balliol College, Oxford. He declared the Romish church to be in error. He died 1387, but his remains were burnt by order of the council of Constance. Huss was a Bohemian reformer. He had a safe-conduct from the Emperor, but was seized notwithstanding. He was condemned by the same council and burnt alive in 1415.} When the commotion had subsided, Luther maintained that the Greek church was as much a church as the church of Rome, and yet it had never acknowledged the church of Rome as being in any way superior to itself, nor that the pope was the head of the church.

Eck maintained that they were heretics because separated from the Roman church.

Luther maintained that the Roman pontiffs could not make articles of faith, as they had done. The scripture was the only authority for the Christian. The discussion on the supremacy of the pope lasted five days. Then followed "Purgatory.*" Luther up to this time admitted the doctrine of purgatory, but not exactly as his opponents did. It was by degrees Luther advanced in truth.

{* The doctrine of Purgatory, as held by the Roman Catholics, is that there is a place "in which the souls of just men are cleansed by a temporary punishment in order to be admitted into their eternal country, into which nothing defiled entereth." This is a doctrine entirely opposed to many clear statements of scripture. Notice, it says that Purgatory is for just men: scripture says of such "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.) The Father "hath made us meet [fit] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 12.)) The question of indulgences came next. These Eck could not uphold. Other minor questions followed. Luther closed the discussion by extolling the scripture as the chief authority.

After this Carlstadt and Eck discussed for two days on the merits of man in good works. The whole discussion had lasted twenty days. Doubtless both thought they had the victory. This was not the question of most importance. What was so striking was that for so many days learned and devout men could stand up and say so much against what the mass of people held to be impregnable. Against the church of Rome had been hurled not simply arguments and words, but facts had been

elicited. The Roman Catholic church had professed to be universal, but Luther had shewn that the Greek church contained its thousands who never belonged to the Romish church; while against its assumption of supremacy had been quoted Fathers, and Councils, and above all, scripture. Decided fruits resulted from the discussion.

It was blessed too to Melanchthon. He now devoted his talents and energies more entirely to the scriptures. It was blessed also to Luther. He read the writings of John Huss, and found that Huss had held the very truths that he held and which he found to be the same that were taught by Paul and the other apostles. But in proportion as the light broke in, it shewed him the evil of that church to which he was attached, and the more was he in spirit separated from it.

Luther now having comparative repose, published his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. He was anxious that the truth he had learned should be known by others. "Christ has given Himself for our sins," said Luther. Man was so bad that nothing less than such a sacrifice could avail; and with this, what need is there of all beside, or of all that pretends to add to this?

Luther was next occupied with the Lord's supper. The Roman church gave to the people the bread only, declaring that the body and blood of Christ were both present in the bread. The priests took the wine. Luther saw that the people should have "both kinds" as it was called, that is, the bread and the wine. He also saw that there must be faith in the one who received the supper. The true nature of the Lord's Supper Luther himself had not yet learned.

Dr. Eck was attacked not only by Luther but by others, until he was driven to desperation, and he determined to do all in his power to crush his opponent. For this purpose he set out for Rome. He would stir up the pope to take action against Luther and all who supported him. Luther foresaw that a storm would be raised, but he went on quietly with his work, trusting in his heavenly Father. "I commit everything to God," said he, "and give up my bark to the winds and waves."

13 Chapter 13. Luther and the Roman Bull — A.D. 1520.

Chapter 13.

Luther and the Roman Bull — A.D. 1520. As the reader has been informed, the Emperor Maximilian was dead, and the Elector Frederick had held supreme sway until a new Emperor should be chosen. The time had now come for the election.

There were three candidates. 1. Charles, King of Spain, Naples and Sicily, besides holding Flanders and Burgundy. He was the grandson of Maximilian, and his age was about nineteen. 2. Francis I., King of France. 3. Henry VIII. King of England. There were objections to all three. Charles was already too powerful, and Francis and Henry were foreigners. It was then proposed that Frederick himself should be Emperor. This however Frederick declined. The Turks were threatening Germany, and Frederick thought a more powerful prince was needed than himself. He proposed Charles, and Charles was elected. This was the Emperor who would be called upon to crush Luther. But while Eck was stirring up Rome, others were also doing all they could to further the object of Eck. Two Universities (Cologne and Louvain) condemned certain of Luther's writings; while others hunted for his life, declaring openly that to kill Luther would be no sin; and it is reported that one day Luther was approached by a stranger, having a weapon concealed in his sleeve. He asked Luther why he went about alone. "I am in the hands of God," said Luther, "He is my strength and shield. What can man do unto me?" The stranger turned pale and hurried away. Thus did God protect His servant. The Elector of Saxony had a representative at Rome, who wrote to say, "I can get no hearing on account of the protection you grant to Luther." The Elector was not frightened, but returned a bold answer. "The doctrine of Luther," said he, "has taken deep root in many hearts. If, instead of refuting it by the testimony of the Bible, attempts are made to crush it by the thunders of the church, great offence will be occasioned, and terrible and dangerous rebellions will be excited."

Luther's eyes were becoming opened to the very great and deadly evils to which he was attached, and he saw that it would be wrong to say "Peace, peace," so as to let such evil reign. No, he must continue the conflict with renewed energy, "I despise alike the rage and the favour of Rome," said he. "Away with reconciliation! I desire never more to have any communication with her. Let her condemn — let her burn my writings. In my turn, I will condemn and publicly burn the canon law, that nest of all heresies."

Luther had gained many friends among those in authority and power, who now and again sent words of encouragement to him, offering to take up arms in his favour should it be needed. Luther's reply was, "I will depend on none but Christ alone."

Luther now published his book on "Good Works." It was necessary to set his hearers right on this point. It had been insisted that to preach faith was to discourage good works. No, said Luther, "the first, the noblest, and the greatest of all works is faith in Jesus Christ. From this work all others must flow. . . . A Christian who has faith in God does all with liberty and joy; while that man who is

not at one with God is full of cares and under bondage. . . . Faith comes from Jesus Christ alone, promised and freely given."

Luther next published his "Appeal to his Imperial Majesty and the christian nobility of the German nation concerning the Reformation of Christianity." In this book he was very bold. "It is against the power of hell we have to contend in this struggle. We must set about the work, hoping nothing from the strength of our own arms, and depending humbly on the Lord." He then went on to shew the error of dividing Christians into "clergy" and "laity" — the "spiritual" and the "temporal." The pope could not make any man a spiritual man; and every Christian was a priest in God's sight, though all had not the same work to do.

He next proved that it was wrong for the priests not to be subject to the magistrates if they did wrong, quoting the passage from Romans xiii. 1 "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers."

All this was new doctrine — no, not new but recovered truth. In the church of Rome the pope was above kings; and if a king disobeyed him he would incite the people to oppose their king. The priests could behave as badly as they pleased, and no magistrate was allowed to touch them. Magistrates must report them to the higher clergy, as they were called, who punished the guilty priests as they thought proper; or if not the priests went without punishment. Luther shewed from scripture that this was quite wrong.

Luther proceeded further in this book to shew how the style and outward grandeur of the pope was entirely different from the condition of our Lord and of His apostles at the beginning. And to keep up this costly pomp Germany was being impoverished. In a multitude of ways the riches of Germany were being drawn away to support the pope. Luther could no longer call him pious or most holy; but "most sinning."

He proceeded to the subject of marriage. It is a rule of the Roman church that the priests must not marry. Luther quoted 1 Timothy iii. 2: Let the bishop be "the husband of one wife." From this Luther proceeded to speak of other abuses, and called aloud that they should be remedied.

Never had the Germans read such a book. It was at once lifting the veil and shewing Rome in its true colours. Would the people of Germany continue to be the slaves of such a power?

Many in Germany answered to the appeal with an emphatic "No!"

Though the book was addressed to the christian nobility of Germany, it touched on many subjects in which all Germans were interested. This attached many to the Reformation who were not Christians, and the Reformation became political as well as christian, which afterwards bore evil fruit. In the meantime Dr. Eck was at Rome, using all his energies to arouse her to action. The pope — Leo X. — was too fond of luxury and amusement to wish to be troubled; but the clergy, stirred up by Dr. Eck, clamoured until Leo felt compelled to listen, and after due deliberation a solemn Bull was issued against Luther. A search was to be made everywhere for his writings, which were to be solemnly burnt in the presence of the clergy. Luther was at once to cease preaching, teaching and writing, and was himself to commit his writings to the flames. He had sixty days allowed him to retract, attested by two witnesses. Failing this, he was, with all his adherents, to be seized and sent to Rome.

Dr. Eck was the bearer of the papal Bull; but before he published it against Luther, Miltitz again sought to bring about a reconciliation, and for this purpose had a meeting with Luther at Lichtenberg.* There were as many as thirty who went with the Reformer, for they were sorely afraid that it was all a plot to get him into their clutches.

{* A town in Bavaria, in the district of Upper Franconia.} The result arrived at was that Luther promised to keep silence for the future if his adversaries would do the same. How he could have promised to do this, believing as he did that he was doing God's work, is difficult to conceive. He might have quoted the memorable answer of Peter and the other apostles in Acts v. 29, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Luther wrote again to the pope, still styling him "The Most Holy Father in God" though in his books he had styled him "most sinning." He told the pope plainly that the corruption of the court of Rome was "greater than that of Sodom or Gomorrah You know that Rome has inundated the world with everything destructive to soul and body. . . . There is no hope for Rome I tell you the truth because I wish you well." "Far from having conceived any evil design against you, I wish you the most precious blessings for all eternity." "I entreat you to restrain if possible the enemies of peace. But I cannot retract my doctrines. I cannot consent that rules of interpretation should be imposed on holy scripture. The word of God, the source of all liberty, flows, must be left free." With this letter Luther presented the pope a little book, "The Liberty of the Christian." In this book Luther said "Faith unites the soul with Christ as a spouse with her husband. . . . Everything which Christ has becomes the property of the believing soul." On the other hand, "From faith flows the love of God; from love flows a life of liberty, charity, and joy." In the meantime Eck was hastening to Germany with the fatal Bull. But Rome had made a great mistake in choosing such a messenger. On the one hand many saw in it a production more of Dr. Eck than of the pope. Had not Dr. Eck been at Rome begging and praying for this? it was really his opposition to Luther; while, on the other hand, the clergy were offended in receiving the Bull from the hands of merely a scholar, and not, as usual, from some high dignitary of the church, and they were in no hurry to publish it.

Eck delivered his copies as he went along, and made his way to Leipsic, where it will be remembered he had disputed with Luther. But since then the truth had spread in that city, and the students, on hearing of the arrival of Dr. Eck, posted about the streets attacks upon him. They also made up a ballad ridiculing him, and went about the streets singing it. Threatening letters also reached him, so that he was glad to take refuge in a monastery from which he stole away by night. At Erfurt the students tore up the copies of the Bull and threw them into the river, saying since it is a bubble, let us see it float." When Luther heard of this he said, "The paper of the Bull is truly a bubble."* Eck did not venture to come to Wittenberg, but sent the Bull to the prior; but the prior said that as he did not receive a letter from the pope he should not publish it.

{*For explanation of this, see the footnote in chapter 11.}

Just at this time an advocate for Luther appeared in the person of Ulric Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer. He was unknown to Luther but he had read his works, and he appealed to the pope, begging him to pause in his rupture with Luther, and begging him to submit the subject to just and impartial men — naming the Emperor Charles, the King of England, and the King of Hungary. This appeal was not listened to. The course of events rolled on.

Luther received the Bull condemning him. "It is Christ," said he, "who is therein condemned. I am cited to appear, not that I may be heard, but that I may recant. . . . Already I feel in my heart more liberty; for I now know that the pope is Antichrist, and that his chair is that of Satan." He proceeded to publish a tract "Against the Bull of Antichrist;"* in which he says "For aught I care, let them destroy my books. I desire nothing better; for all I wanted was to lead Christians to the Bible that they might afterwards throw away my writings. Great God, if we had but a right understanding of the holy scriptures what need would there be of my books? . . . My strength and my consolation are in a place where neither men nor devils can ever reach them." That was in Christ in heaven.

{* Luther, with others, did not distinguish between being an antichrist, and the Antichrist. Rome was the former, and not the latter.} In some places the Bull had effect. At Ingoldstadt the booksellers' shops were searched and all Luther's books were carried off. In some of the states of the Emperor, Luther's books were consumed on scaffolds erected for the purpose with great ceremony, to strike terror into the people. In the Low Countries Margaret governed. "Who is this Luther?" asked she. "An ignorant monk," was the reply. "Do you, who are learned and so many, write against him? The world will surely believe a company of learned men rather than a single monk of no learning." But those learned men of Louvain raised an immense pile of wood to burn the writings of the ignorant monk, and numbers hastened to the spot, carrying their books, and cast them into the flames. The popish party were delighted, but afterwards found out that many of the books burnt were not Luther's but scholastic and popish books. The count of Nassau, viceroy of Holland, was solicited to permit the burning of Luther's books; but he said, "Go and preach the gospel as purely as Luther, and you will have no reason to complain of any one." Thus was it proved how Luther's books had spread, and how the truth he taught had taken root in some even of the noble and the great. But Luther proceeded to act. On the 17th of November he assembled a notary and five witnesses at the convent, and he then and there solemnly appealed from the pope to a general christian council. "He charges the pope with many and grave sins." And he calls upon the Emperor, the Electors, princes, counts, barons, etc., etc., to unite with him "to resist the anti-christian proceedings of the pope." This was soon printed and scattered over Germany, and found its way far beyond. Here again we see the movement was becoming political as well as Christian. Luther appealed to the heads of the states to resist the pope, irrespective of their being Christians themselves. On the 10th of December bills were posted on the walls of the University, asking the people to come to the East Gate at nine o'clock. As the hour approached, professors, tradesmen, and students were seen wending their way to that spot. A pile of wood had been made which was soon set on fire, and as it blazed Luther stood forward and cast into the flames the "canon law," the "Decretals of the popes," the "Clementines," the "Extravagances," — some of Eck's and Emser's writings, and above all, the pope's Bull, exclaiming aloud, "Since thou hast afflicted the Lord's Holy One, may fire unquenchable afflict and consume thee!"

Luther referred here to the Bull, and not to the pope; but such an act as this we believe to be unworthy of Luther and the Lord for whom he fought. We are told that "We do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." (2 Cor. x. 3, 4.) This act partook too much of the character of warring after the flesh. They had burnt his writings: he in return would burn theirs.

One thing was now clear and certain, Luther was separated from the pope and the papal church! There was no retreat now; he must proceed and conquer, or die! The next day Luther proceeded

with his lectures on the Psalms. The hall was more than usually crowded. After his lecture he proceeded to speak of what he had done, and solemnly to warn his hearers against adhering to the doctrines of Rome. "As long as my life shall last," said he, "I for my part will never cease to warn my brethren of the wound and plague of Babylon; lest any of those who now walk with us should slide back like the rest into the pit of hell." By Babylon he of course meant Rome. People had shuddered when they saw him burn the Bull; but they were strengthened when they heard his preaching.

Luther's boldness encouraged others. Carlstadt raised his voice; and Melanchthon raised his. Timid as he was, he surpassed himself in appealing to the rulers of the land.

Luther now had a strong conviction that God had really chosen him to do a special work for Him. "Who knows," said he, "whether God has not called and chosen me for this very purpose, and whether they who despise me have not reason to fear lest they be found despisers of God Himself?" Bold language, but not too bold for any called of God to do any work for Him.

He was again charged with preaching novelties — new doctrines. He denied it. They were old doctrines, the doctrines of scripture; they had lain buried and unobserved for so long that men now called them new. But while Luther was thus progressing in his work, all eyes were turned on Frederick, and all asked, Will he carry out the pope's Bull and expel Luther, or give him up to the pope? Just now Frederick was at Aix-la-Chapelle at the crowning of Charles. There was a large concourse of princes and nobles, and the pope had sent a special nuncio to present the Bull to the Emperor, and demand the crushing of Luther. The nuncio — by name Aleandro, a very learned man — proceeded to burn publicly Luther's books. He was told that this was no use. The doctrines taught by Luther were in people's hearts, deeply rooted; they did not exist in books only. No matter, he would burn the books and strike terror into the people.

He next appealed to the Emperor to condemn Luther. The Emperor drew back: he pleaded he had only just been elected, and without consulting the Elector and his own councillors he could not strike a blow at a section of the nation so numerous as this had now become. The nuncio hastened off to Frederick, the oldest of the Electors, and demanded the punishment of Luther, or for him to be delivered up to the pope. Frederick said it was too important a matter to be hastily decided. He would communicate with the nuncio in writing. This was an important crisis with the Elector. Would he give up Luther, or would he deny Rome? Luther saw that the work he was engaged in did not rest upon the power of princes, though they could greatly help or hinder the work. "It is not," said he, "to princes or pontiffs that the task is assigned of defending God's word. Enough for them if they can themselves escape the judgments of the Lord and His Anointed."

Frederick, on due consideration, told the nuncio that Luther's writings had not yet been refuted or shewn to be fit only for the flames; he demanded therefore that Luther should be furnished with a safe-conduct and permitted to answer for himself before a tribunal composed of learned, pious, and impartial judges.

It was in vain to appeal to the Emperor. Charles clearly saw that the cause of Luther might be of great use to him. If he wanted to please the pope he could shew zeal against Luther; but if the pope did not please the emperor, he would let Luther alone. Anyhow he had nothing to lose; he would use Luther as a tool to work out his own ends. But God was above all this merely human

policy. He had work for Luther yet to do, and he would protect His servant till the work was done. In the meantime the work progressed. Though the plague was raging at Wittenberg, new students were constantly arriving. Between five and six hundred daily listened to the truth as taught by Luther and Melanchthon.

Luther's works were also reprinted and circulated all over Germany by colporteurs. And this was done notwithstanding the orders of the pope that everywhere they were to be burnt. It is clear that the pope was losing his power over Germany; and in proportion to this the truths of the gospel were spread abroad and were read.

14 Chapter 14. The Diet at Worms — A.D. 1521.

Chapter 14. The Diet at Worms — A.D. 1521. The question as to the toleration or condemnation of Luther had not been settled — it had only been postponed. At the Diet of Worms* held in January, this was one of the subjects to be settled.

{* Worms is a city of Hesse Darmstadt in the province of Rheinhessen, on the left bank of the Rhine, a few hundred yards from the river, and twenty-six miles from Mentz.} The Emperor was sadly perplexed. He was indebted to the Elector Frederick for his crown, how could he offend him? On the other hand, Aleandro and his friends were constantly soliciting the Emperor to put into execution the pope's Bull. At length Frederick resolved to have Luther summoned to Worms and there he was to be heard in defence of his doctrines in presence of those who could discuss the points with him. The Emperor guaranteed that no violence should be done to Luther. The Elector and Luther's friends generally were filled with fear and forebodings. They knew too well the stratagems of Rome to entrap its victims, and they feared that Luther would never quit Worms alive. Luther, on the other hand, never wavered; he took it as a voice from God, and go he would, if he was carried on a litter, for at the time he was but very weak. But the Elector had written to the Emperor begging that he might be excused from bringing Luther with him. He feared that Luther's burning the pope's Bull would excite the pope's friends too much and endanger Luther's safety. On the other hand, Aleandro and his friends were in the greatest alarm. In travelling to Worms he had seen too well how public opinion was in Luther's favour, and he feared the Reformer's presence in Worms would only increase his popularity. Besides, he repudiated the thought that it was competent for any one to re-open and discuss questions already settled by Rome. It must not be. The result was that the Emperor wrote to the Elector, telling him to leave Luther at Wittenberg. His sixty days' grace had already expired, and he must bear the consequence of not retracting.

Luther alone was vexed at the decision. But matters progressed notwithstanding. The condemnation of Luther was urged again and again; but the Emperor and princes were all very slow in taking it up. Many saw that it would serve their purpose better to let it lie an open question. Aleandro was alarmed, and wrote off to Rome to try and arouse it from its apparent sleep. "Germany is falling away from Rome," wrote he; "Money, money, or Germany is lost!"

Rome arose and issued another Bull, condemning Luther unconditionally and positively, and all his adherents. The former Bull had a condition — if Luther did not recant — the time was now past, and he was EX-COM-MU-NI-CA-TED from the church of Rome by the pope himself. Thus the last tie was broken — Luther was free, free to be killed by any one, and despoiled of all his goods!

Thus assailed, Luther turned to Christ. "It is a glorious thing," said he, "that we sinners believing in Christ and feeding on His flesh, should have Him dwelling in us in all His power, His wisdom, and His righteousness; for it is written, 'Whoever believeth in me, in him I abide.' O wonderful abode! marvellous tabernacle, how far excelling that set up by Moses! . . . Often does the Christian stumble, and in his outward aspect all is weakness and reproach. But . . . a power lies hid which the world cannot know, and which yet must overcome the world, for Christ abideth in him."

Luther, having heard that it was in contemplation to call him to Worms, wrote to the Elector the following letter, worded so that he could communicate it to the princes, or to the Diet, with the hope of removing any wrong impressions they might have either of himself or of his work:

"I rejoice with all my heart, most serene Prince, that his Imperial Majesty is disposed to have this affair brought before him. I call Christ to witness that it is the cause of the German nation, of the Catholic church, of the Christian world, of God Himself, not the cause of a solitary, humble individual. I am ready to repair to Worms, provided only that a safe-conduct, and learned, pious, and impartial judges be allowed me. I am ready to answer for myself; for it is not in the spirit of recklessness, not for the sake of worldly profit, that I have taught the doctrine which is laid to my charge; I have taught it in obedience to my conscience and to my oath as a Doctor of the Holy Scriptures; for God's glory have I taught it, for the salvation of the christian church, for the good of the German people, for the rooting out of gross superstition and grievous abuses, the cure of innumerable evils, the wiping away of foul disgrace, the overthrow of tyranny, blasphemy, and impiety in countless forms." In the meantime Aleandro had received the money he asked from Rome, and was now busy scattering it right and left wherever he thought influence was to be bought for the pope against Luther. Every day was the Emperor solicited and teased to condemn Luther; but he and his councillors still saw that it would suit their purpose better not to settle anything on the subject. At last the Emperor told Aleandro that he must appear before the Diet and convince the Diet that it was their duty to condemn Luther. This Aleandro undertook to do. On the 13th of February, Aleandro stood before the Diet, and for three hours he argued and protested that Luther should be condemned. His charges against Luther were, "He sins," said he, "against the dead, for he denies the existence of purgatory; he sins against heaven, for he says that he would not believe an angel sent from heaven; he sins against the church, for he maintains that all Christians are priests; he sins against the saints, for he treats their venerable writings with contempt; he sins against councils, for he calls the council of Constance an assembly of devils; he sins against the secular power, for he forbids the punishment of death to be inflicted on any one who has not committed a mortal sin." How strange! not a word that Luther had sinned against God or the scripture! Aleandro called loudly for his condemnation. His discourse, which was eloquent, had a decided effect upon the audience. But strange to say in attacking Luther, Aleandro had also attacked many friends of the pope, who saw so plainly the abuses that had crept in, that they were loudly calling for reform. So that a few days after, Duke George of Saxony, who did not agree with Luther, stood up in the Diet and proceeded to rehearse a long catalogue of grievances against Rome, or rather against the Romish priests and clergy in Germany. Their conduct was shameful, while they sapped the country of its wealth. Money, money, was their cry — everywhere and always their cry was money. Duke George saw the evils; but he saw not the remedy as Luther did. The Duke thought that Rome could reform itself; Luther saw that the only remedy was to bring in the light and truth. But this soon convinced him that Rome could not be reformed: it must be abandoned. The Diet nominated a committee to inquire into these abuses, and they drew up a list of one hundred and one. The Diet therefore now, altogether apart from Luther, demanded reform. This encouraged the friends of Luther, who now appealed to the Emperor that Luther should be heard in the Diet in defence of his doctrines. Aleandro and his friends did much to prevent it, but at length the Emperor decided to summon Luther to Worms. At Wittenburg Luther's friends were alarmed when the summons arrived; but nothing could deter Luther. He would set out at once. Three of his friends accompanied him — Amsdorff, John Schurff, a professor of law, and Peter

Suaven, a young Danish student. His parting with Melanchthon was touching. "If I never return," said he, "and my enemies should take my life, cease not, dear brother, to teach and stand fast in the truth." Then committing his soul to Him who is faithful, Luther stepped into his conveyance and left Wittenberg. As he left them, many could not stay their tears. They too committed him to God. The eyes of Germany were on this man going to Worms; their hearts beat, and they wondered how it would all end.

Various were the rebuffs Luther met with on the road, but he attributed them to Satan's efforts to stop his going. At Naumburg he saw the messengers of the Emperor busy posting up bills ordering all persons to bring the writings of Luther to the magistrates. The imperial herald who conducted Luther asked him whether after such a sight he would go any further. "Yes," said Luther; "though I should be put under interdict in every town, I will go on." At Weimar he met Duke John, brother to the Elector, who gave him money for his journey. From Weimar he went to Erfurt. He had written to Lange telling him of his journey: but as Luther approached the town he saw a troop of horsemen, but could not tell whether they were friends or foes. They turned out to be friends, come out to welcome him, and a larger crowd met him nearer the town. From Erfurt another joined the party. It was Jonas, a student of law, but a disciple of Christ, and afterwards a zealous preacher. Luther was received with joy and preached in the church. In some places Luther's journey resembled a triumph; but the entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem, and what followed, was forcibly brought to his mind, and he knew not how it would fare with himself. Of warnings he had plenty. "There are so many cardinals and bishops at Worms," said the people; "do return. They will burn you as they did Huss." Luther replied, "If they light a fire which would burn from Wittenberg to Worms, and even to the sky, I would pass through it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and confess Him my Saviour."

One day an imperial officer, dispersing the crowd, approached Luther and said, "Are you the man who has undertaken to reform popery? How will you manage it?" "Yes," answered Luther, "I am that man. I am depending on the Almighty God, whose word and commandment I have." The officer, moved, said, "Dear friend, you have told me something in that. I am one of Charles's servants, but your Master is greater than mine. He will help you."

Luther passed on. At Eisenach he was taken ill and was bled, but was better in the morning and went on. At various places he was over and over again told he would never escape; but nothing daunted or stopped him. As he approached Worms the friends of the pope laid a plot to draw him aside for a few days (under the plea of settling matters by consultation), so that the time of his safe-conduct should expire, and then they could seize him. They told Bucer, Luther's friend, that if Luther entered Worms it would be all over with him; and Bucer hastened off to meet him. But Luther was not to be led astray. He said he was going to Worms, and if any wanted to see him, they must see him there. Spalatin himself began to be alarmed at the threats he heard, and he too, from a good motive, sent a message, begging him not to enter Worms, when Luther made use of that memorable sentence, "Though there should be as many devils at Worms as there are tiles on its roofs, I would enter it."

Some of the friends of the Elector went out to meet him, and a crowd waited at the gates of the city. It was with difficulty he could be brought to his lodging, so anxious were the people to see the man who had not been crushed by a pope's Bull, a thing never before heard of. After a few hours'

rest, counts, barons, knights, etc., flocked in to see him.

He was summoned to appear the next day at four o'clock. At the hour the imperial herald went to fetch him; but the crowds were so dense that they could not proceed. The herald was compelled to take him through some private houses and gardens, and thus to reach the Diet. People even went on to the roofs of the houses to catch a glance of Luther. When they reached the building again they met crowds, and it was with great difficulty a passage could be forced. As he approached the door a valiant knight, George Frundsberg, said to him, "My poor monk, my poor monk, thou hast a march and a struggle to go through, such as neither I nor many other captains have seen the like in our most bloody battles. But if thy cause be just, and thou art sure of it, go forward in God's name, and fear nothing! He will not forsake thee." Encouraging words to one who needed them.

It was an august assembly. An Emperor, an Archduke, six Electors, twenty-four dukes, eight margraves, with a number of archbishops, bishops and prelates — in all, two hundred persons. Luther seemed over-awed at first; but a prince whispered, "Fear not them who are able to kill the body, and cannot destroy the soul." Another said, "When you are brought before kings it shall be given to you by the Spirit of your Father what you shall say."

Luther was conducted to a spot opposite the Emperor. A table was near, on which was a pile of Luther's books.

"Do you acknowledge these writings to have been composed by you?" was demanded of Luther.

Also "Are you prepared to retract these works, and the propositions contained therein, or do you persist in what you have therein advanced?"

Luther replied, "I acknowledge the books, the names of which have been read, to be of my writing; I cannot deny them." As to the second question he asked for time to reply. He was allowed till the next day. On the next day Luther passed through deep exercise of soul. It seemed to him as though God had hidden His face from him; and yet he could say, "My soul is Thine. Yes, I have Thine own word for it. My soul belongs to Thee, and will abide with Thee for ever! Amen. O God, send help." His courage revived, but the moment was really serious. "God or Caesar?" said he. "I said No to Tetzl; I said No to the Roman legate at Augsburg; I said No to the doctors in the hall at Leipsic; I have said No to the pope and have burnt his Bull. I have yet to say NO to the Emperor."

Again at four o'clock the heralds arrived and Luther was brought to the Diet. Once more he stood before the Emperor, and was told to answer the questions asked him yesterday. To the first he had already admitted that the books were his. To the second question, he said that he had written many books, some of which even his adversaries had found no fault with — these he could not retract. If he did so, he should be retracting that which all held to be truth.

Again, he said he had written some works against popery, exposing its evil doctrines and its wickedness. He could not retract these, or he should be strengthening the evil. In the third place he had written books against individuals who had undertaken to defend Rome. He admitted that he might have used too much violence in his attacks; but he could not retract these, without sanctioning the impieties of his opponents. As to the whole he said, "If I have spoken evil bear witness against me . . . I implore you by the mercies of God to prove to me by the writings of the prophets and apostles that I am in error. As soon as I shall be convinced I will instantly retract all

my errors, and will myself be the first to seize my writings and commit them to the flames." Closing with the words, "I beseech you with all humility not to permit the hatred of my enemies to rain upon me an indignation I have not deserved." When he had done — he had spoken in German — he was requested to repeat it in Latin for those not well acquainted with German. This Luther did. The Chancellor of Treves said he had not answered the question, "Will you, or will you not, retract?"

Luther said, "I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is as clear as noonday that they have often fallen into error, and even into glaring inconsistency with themselves. If then I am not convinced by proof from holy scripture . . . I neither can nor will retract anything. I stand here and can say no more. God help me. Amen."

"If you do not retract," said the Chancellor, "the Emperor, and the states of the Empire, will proceed to deal with an obstinate heretic."

"May God be my helper!" said Luther, "for I can retract nothing!" Luther withdrew from the Diet for them to deliberate. But he was again called in, and told he was not required to retract all his works. It was absurd to ask to be convinced by scripture: he was reviving what had already been condemned by the General Council of Constance. Would he retract any? Luther said he could give no other answer than he had already given. He could not retract.

It was late — all went to their homes. Two imperial officers conducted Luther. Some ran after him. "Are they leading you to prison?" they asked. "No," said Luther, "they take me to my hotel." All were excited, and wondered what would be the end of it. When the reformer had entered his hotel the old duke Eric of Brunswick, previously an enemy to the reformer's doctrines, sent him a silver vase of Eimbeck beer to refresh him. Luther being thirsty, poured out some of the beer and drank it. "As this day Duke Eric has remembered me," said Luther, "may our Lord Jesus remember him in the hour of his last struggle." It is recorded that the duke on his death-bed called to remembrance the prayer of Luther, and he asked his page to bring the Bible and read to him. "The youth read the words of Christ, and the soul of the dying man took comfort." For two or three days they discussed what was to be done with Luther. Just then the Emperor was desirous of pleasing the pope, and he therefore threatened Luther. Some advised that he should be at once seized in violation of the safe-conduct but even some of the friends of the pope exclaimed against anything so false. At last it was decided to give Luther three days, and any who liked could use their influence with him. The Archbishop of Treves undertook to try and mediate between Luther and the pope. They had an interview; but it ended as it began. His enemies did not attempt to prove him wrong by scripture; and he could not retract anything till they did.

After this, several attempts were made which ended in the same way. At length it was proposed to submit the question to a General Council: would Luther agree to that? "Yes," said Luther, "if the Council decide according to holy scripture." The Archbishop said this was absurd; and again it all failed. Luther was ordered to quit Worms and return to Wittenberg.

Luther afterwards gave a history of the whole affair in few words — thus: "Are these books of your writing? Yes. Will you retract them? No. Well, be gone! There's the whole history."

Soon after Luther left Worms, Frederick and several of the princes left also. The field was thus free for Aleandro, who did not hesitate to use this opportunity. He drew up an edict condemning Luther, and obtained the Emperor's signature. He immediately sent it to the printer, and spread it abroad

everywhere. It was dated the 8th of May, but there is good authority for saying that it was not signed till several days later. By dating it the 8th it would make it appear to be drawn up while the Diet was yet sitting in full force. Its very violence and falseness destroyed its force except among the extreme partisans of the pope. Listen to what it said of Luther: "He has shamefully vilified the unalterable law of holy marriage: he has laboured to incite the laity to imbrue their hands in the blood of their priests; and, defying all authority, has incessantly excited the people to revolt, schism, war, murder, theft, incendiarism, and the utter destruction of the christian faith In a word, and passing over many other evil intentions, this being, who is no man, but Satan himself under the semblance of a man in a monk's hood, has collected, in one offensive mass, all the worst heresies of former ages, adding his own to the number." Luther was to be seized wherever he was, and his books to be burnt. Whoever helped or aided Luther was also to be placed under the ban of the empire.

15 Chapter 15. Luther at the Wartburg — A.D. 1521, 1522.

Chapter 15.

Luther at the Wartburg — A.D. 1521, 1522. In the meantime Luther wended his way to Wittenberg. From Eisenach he went to Mora to visit his grandmother, his uncle, and other relatives. Here in peace and quietness he spent the evening, enjoying it the more after the noise and turmoil of Worms. In the morning Luther, with his brother and James Amsdorff started on their way to Waltershausen. As they approached a narrow defile a noise was heard, and in a moment five masked men, well armed and on horseback, surrounded the waggon. The driver was ordered to stop, and on his resistance he was felled to the earth. James Luther jumped to the ground and fled. Amsdorff was seized and held tight, while the others were getting Luther out of the waggon. He was at once set on a spare horse, and a cloak thrown over him; and the five horsemen hurried him away, leaving Amsdorff and the driver in the greatest consternation. Finding they were alone, they mounted and urged the horse to the utmost speed, spreading the news as they went, that Luther had been carried off by his enemies. In the meantime Luther was hurried along in an opposite direction, the horsemen varied their route to prevent pursuit, and after long riding they ascended a hill and drew up at the door of a castle, which proved to be the Wartburg in the black forest on the mountains of Thuringia. He was conducted to an apartment where he was shewn the dress of a knight. This he was to wear for the future with a sword. He was to be known in the castle as Knight George.

Luther was safe. One who had carried him off was a nobleman Burkhard von Hund, lord of a neighbouring castle; another was John of Berlepsch, commandant of the Wartburg: the three others were a part of the garrison. They were his friends who had taken him away for safety till the storm which had been gathering should expend itself. But so well had the plan been carried out that none of his friends at Wittenberg or even the Elector knew for a long time where he was. Luther had been apprised beforehand that it would be better for him to be hidden for a time, but he knew not to what place he was going. He was now a solitary prisoner in the Wartburg. If he looked out of his window he saw a forest of trees. But he could look up, and by faith see God ruling over all. When Luther arose next morning he remembered that he had to leave off his ecclesiastical dress. As he cast it aside he said, "Farewell, thou miserable cowl, that suffices in the monk's opinion to ransom from sin and from death! Farewell, proud robe, which they compare — nay, which they prefer — to the spotless robe and precious blood of Jesus Christ. Farewell." He dressed himself as a knight but he was the same Luther still.

Great was the consternation at the disappearance of Luther. His friends feared the worst and bewailed his loss. His enemies were in ecstasies. But this was soon cut short, for there arose such a cry of shame on the friends of the pope and even on the Emperor for their supposed treachery that many were glad to hide themselves from the wrath of the people. Aleandro, who had so pleaded for the destruction of Luther, now that he was destroyed as he thought was embarrassed and amazed. "The only way to extricate ourselves," said one, "is to light our torches and go

searching through the earth for Luther, till we can restore him to the nation that will have him." The edict that was obtained with so much labour from the Emperor, and which was to strike terror into Luther and his friends, was allowed to lie ineffectual in some places, and was torn to pieces in others. The absence of Luther, and the charges made against the friends of the pope averted, or at least lessened the power of the blow, except where the papal power was in full force.

Luther, or rather as we should now say, Knight George, was away from it all in quietness and repose. He was well treated and was allowed to walk about the fortress, but not to leave it. Here he had time to review the whole of his life. Was it his own self-will that had stirred up such a commotion, or was it God who had done it, and used him as His instrument? Was it an invention of his to teach that men were to be justified by faith, or was it not declared plainly in God's word, "therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God?" (Rom. v. 1.) As he meditated he was confirmed and strengthened. It was of God, and he was the instrument only. But again he thought of the sad state of the church. "They will take advantage of my absence," said he, "and undo the work I have begun." And then he dreaded being charged with being a deserter. "Rather," said he, "would I be stretched on burning coals than stagnate here half dead." At other times he was dejected and cast down. One day a cat stole into his room, and Luther saw how she sat and narrowly watched a bird, which hung in a cage at his window, ready to pounce upon it in a moment should it leave its place of safety. "It is thus," said Luther, "that the pope watches me, ready to pounce upon me if I go out."

One day a message came to Melancthon at Wittenberg telling him that Luther was alive. His joy was great, but saddened by the thought that he was a prisoner somewhere. The news soon spread that Luther was alive; his enemies consoled themselves that if alive at least he was silent. But this did not last long. Luther must be at work with his pen, though he was not able to use his voice. Tract followed tract in quick succession; some were controversial, and others for the building up and instruction of the saints. He called the Wartburg his Patmos, in allusion to John being banished to the Isle of Patmos in Revelation i. 9. But the confinement began to tell upon Luther, and his health declined. So they allowed him to take short walks outside the fortress, attended by a rough but faithful guard. Luther knew he ran the risk of being seized; but by degrees he was more venturesome, and visited the villages round. Of course he was always dressed as Knight George, with his sword by his side. One day they strolled into an inn, and Luther took up some books which lay on the table, and was soon engrossed in their contents. His guard called him away. This was not acting like a knight, who was not supposed to take great interest in books. At another time they visited a convent: when one of the monks recognized that the knight was Luther, and he called out with astonishment. They were soon in their stirrups and far away.

Luther being hidden, the friends of the pope thought it a good opportunity to revive the sale of indulgences. One who did this was Albert, Archbishop and Elector of Mentz. Luther no sooner heard of this than his spirit was roused within him, and he resolved to condemn the iniquity. But previously he wrote to the Archbishop, telling him of his design, and saying that if he persisted in keeping this idol he should be compelled to hold him up to rebuke as he had already done the pope. The Archbishop — whether from fear or from conviction, we know not — wrote a kind letter to Luther, telling him that that which had caused him alarm no longer existed.

Luther's confinement was principally turned to good account by his using the leisure and quiet to make great progress in translating the scripture. He greatly desired to see the Bible translated into every language, but especially of course into German. "Scripture without comment," said Luther, "is the sun whence all teachers receive their light." "I will translate the New Testament into our mother tongue. Oh if this book could but be in the hands — in the hearts of all." Then "Luther must retire, and the Bible advance; the man must disappear, and God appear." How like the language of John the Baptist as to our Lord, "He must increase, but I must decrease." It is well if the servant can willingly retire when his Master appears.

While Luther was translating the New Testament he was again arrested by the doctrine of justification by faith. "If man is saved by faith and grace alone, what becomes of the monastic life," said he, "which is wholly based on the presumed merits of the monks? Monkery and salvation by grace are in flagrant opposition. . . . Monkery must fall." Luther saw that to live a monk's life was simply one of idleness and uselessness; but to pretend to salvation in that way was a positive denial of the truth. Besides, "the monks are the pillars of the popedom," said he; "I will throw down these pillars. God has made nothing which Satan has not caricatured; and because it was God's will to have a nation of priests, Satan has made a nation of monks. . . . No," continued he, "I am not a monk; I am a new creature, not of the pope, but of Jesus Christ. Christ alone, Christ without a mediator, is my bishop, my abbot, my prior, my Lord, my Father, my Master; and I will have no other." Noble words! Would that thousands who profess to have outstretched Luther could say the same truthfully! This was the commencement of Luther's war against the monastic vows. These were chastity, poverty and obedience. "Whatever cometh not of faith is sin," said Luther. "Whoever makes a vow of chastity, of service to God, without faith, makes an impious vow. We must utterly suppress all convents. There is only one order that is holy and maketh holy — namely, Christianity and Faith. All who possess the Spirit of Christ are priests of the living God." This latter is a great truth, often repeated but seldom learned. Luther put it forth to the Christians of Germany, and it was good the light of God's truth should shine forth. We would fain hope it penetrated many a secluded spot where the light of God's word had not yet reached. But there were shades as well as sunshine in Luther's experience. While in the Wartburg he was at times tormented by what appeared to him to be a bodily appearance of Satan. It is recorded that one day while Luther was at his work of translating, he thought he saw Satan present in his room, walking round him with threatening attitude as if to spring upon him should his eye be diverted. At length Luther could bear it no longer, and taking up the inkstand he threw it at his enemy. The inkstand struck the wall and was broken to pieces. The keeper of the Wartburg points out to travellers the mark in the wall made by the inkstand. But Luther's confinement began to be intolerable to him, and he longed to see his friends. He knew he ran the risk of falling into the hands of his enemies, but that did not deter him. At the end of November he secretly quitted the Wartburg and set out for Wittenberg.

Various were the evil tidings that he heard during his journey, but he arrived safely. His friends were quickly called together. They were overjoyed at again embracing their friend, and they related to him the progress of the work. They had sweet intercourse together, had prayer, and he returned to the Wartburg. The work had greatly increased, but so had the opposition to it. The Sorbonne, the great school of Paris, had deliberated on Luther's doctrines, and had condemned them as heresy, to be accursed. This was an important decision. It was not simply that Rome condemned Luther — the first University in France had likewise condemned him. Melancthon

replied, and vindicated the truth.

O Lord, the work we do is Thine,
So we can calmly wait,
And care not for the rage of man:
It all comes far too late.
Thy victory on the cross was won,
And leads to victory now;
Yea, in eternity 'twas planned,
And man is made to bow.
The truth of God must e'er prevail,
And work His sovereign will;
Then let us labour on, and aid
His purpose to fulfil.

16 Chapter 16. The Reformation and Its Dangers — A.D. 1522.

Chapter 16. The Reformation and Its Dangers — A.D. 1522.

After Luther's stolen visit to Wittenberg important events rapidly succeeded each other. There was then a bold monk named Gabriel Didymus who attacked the useless lives of the monks, and this he did with such effect that in one day thirteen monks left the monastery to seek a livelihood in any honest way they could find, and one married.

He and his friends next attacked the Mass, the Romish name for the Lord's supper. They found from scripture, as Luther had already said, that those who partook of the Lord's supper should eat the bread and drink the wine; whereas it had been the habit of the priests, as we have seen, to give the people the bread, and drink the wine themselves. As this was now seen by many to be unscriptural, a demand was made that the truth should be put into practice, and that the people should partake of both kinds as it was called. Carlstadt was Archdeacon, and he felt the matter to be so important and urgent, that on Christmas day — the year was 1521 — he took upon himself to say that the Lord's supper would be partaken of in two kinds, and he accordingly introduced it. It was then so novel, that the people were startled and afraid, so that only five partook of it. But many soon saw it to be right, and it became usual.

Satan however could not see such inroads upon his kingdom of ignorance and darkness without making strenuous efforts to oppose it, or to spoil what he could not prevent. There were some men at Zwickau (a town in Saxony on the left bank of the Mulde) who pretended to have revelations from God. They despised and repudiated the doctrine of always clinging to the Bible. Why should they not have direct messages from heaven? These they pretended to have. Nicolas Storch, a weaver, was leader. He declared that the angel Gabriel had appeared to him. He soon had followers. From these he chose twelve apostles and seventy disciples. The declaration was that they had now set up a new church of God. Their former baptism in infancy was of no avail; they exhorted their followers to be re-baptised into the new church.

Nicolas Haussman was pastor of Zwickau and he opposed these new prophets as they were called, and they were expelled from communion. This they cared little for. They would hold meetings by themselves. But disturbances arose, and some were sent to prison.

Indignant at this treatment, Storch and some of his followers repaired to Wittenberg. The students were just then unsettled by the changes already introduced, and were thus prepared to receive more new things. The prophets waited on the professors of the University, declaring to them that they were sent of God to teach the people. They had had special communications from heaven. Melancthon asked one, "Who commissioned you to preach?" "The Lord our God," was the ready reply. Melancthon and the other professors were alarmed and confounded. Who could say it was not true? But who could say it was?

One of the prophets remained at Wittenberg and went from house to house stirring up the people. The Elector Frederick heard of the commotion, and he too was at a loss to know whether it was of

God or not. Luther also heard of it. He at once pronounced it to be of Satan, and said that he had expected it. But he begged of the authorities not to prosecute the people. Perhaps he thought if left alone it would die out of itself.

Carlstadt was now the great reformer at Wittenberg. He did not receive the prophets as from God, nor receive their doctrine of re-baptism. But he caught some of the enthusiasm, and declared that they must proceed with the good work. The first thing he took up was images and image worship. He searched the scriptures and produced the passages against this practice, and proceeded to exhort his hearers not only to abstain from evil worship, but to prevent it. Thus appealed to by an Archdeacon, the people broke into the churches, and smashing the images, burnt them.

Carlstadt went further. He now despised learning. Those who listened to him as their tutor, were now exhorted by him to leave their learning and take up with some honest employment. Thus, alas! when men begin to throw off the shackles that have so long bound them, they require great wisdom to know when and where to stop. The master of the boys' school also exhorted the parents of the children to fetch them away. God was revealing Himself to the prophets apart from learning. Of what use the learning then?

We can easily conceive how all these strange proceedings produced commotion and distrust in men's minds. What would come next? The friends of Rome at a distance were delighted, and did not fail to pronounce this as the fruit of the doctrines taught by Luther. The real friends of the Reformation began to see things in a serious light. This new movement must be stopped, or great damage would be done to the cause of truth. But who was to do it? Melancthon was too timid. The Elector was alarmed, but felt powerless. People instinctively turned their eyes to the Wartburg, and sighed and cried and demanded for Luther. He received pressing invitations to return to his work at Wittenberg, to this new work of determining plainly what was of God and what was of Satan.

17 Chapter 17. Luther Returns to Wittenberg — A.D. 1522.

Chapter 17.

Luther Returns to Wittenberg — A.D. 1522. The call for Luther exactly answered to the stirrings of his own spirit. Yes, he would leave the Wartburg, and go to Wittenberg. On March 3 he quitted the castle, and in his knight's dress he started on his journey. At Jena he was compelled to take shelter from a thunder-storm. He stayed at the Black Bear. In the public room he was sitting reading when two young men entered and sat down by the door. They were Swiss students who had studied at Basle, and were now on their way to Wittenberg. Luther invited them to his table and offered them a glass of beer. By their accent he detected that they were Swiss, and he asked them from what canton they came. "St. Gall," said they: "could you tell us where Dr. Luther is now?" "I know for certain," said Luther, "that he is not at Wittenberg. If you will be advised by me apply yourselves to the Greek and Hebrew, that you may understand the holy scriptures." He then asked them about Erasmus. The students thought it very strange that a knight should ask them about Erasmus, and tell them to study Greek and Hebrew. Luther asked them what was thought of Luther in Switzerland? Some extolled him, and some declared him a heretic. The knight's cordiality put the students at their ease, and they greatly desired to know what book he had been reading. On shutting it, one ventured to take it up and look at it, when to his surprise he found it was a Hebrew Psalter. He said he would give his little finger to understand that language. "You certainly will have your wish," said the knight, "if you will take the pains to acquire it." The name of Kessler was now called. This was one of these young men. The landlord told him that the knight was Luther himself. He hastened back and told his companion. But he thought he must have said Hutten. Just at that time two more travellers stopped at the hotel and entered the room. One of them laid a book on the table. "What book may that be?" asked the knight. "It is a commentary on the Gospels and Epistles by Dr. Luther," said the travellers; "it has only just appeared." "I shall get it shortly," said the knight.

Dinner being announced, the Swiss students drew back, but Luther invited them, saying he would pay the score. During the meal they were all struck by the remarks made by the knight.

One of the travellers declared that he would give ten florins for an opportunity to meet with and converse with Luther, little thinking that he it was who was before them.

They all parted company, and Luther went his way. He tarried next at Borne, and from thence he wrote to the Elector Frederick informing him of his return to Wittenberg. When the students reached their destination they discovered that the knight of the Black Bear was the veritable Luther. He recognized them and introduced them to the professors.

Luther was glad to see his friends, but was deeply pained at the state of things. "Luther is back" was soon spread abroad, "and is to preach to-morrow." The morrow came and the church was crowded in the extreme. All were anxious to hear Luther on the state of affairs.

He proceeded carefully with his discourse, saying how anxious we ought to be lest we needlessly offend any. But he came to the points at issue. "The mass is a bad thing." You say it must be abolished. Quite so, but let it be done in the right way. "Our first aim must be to win the heart; and to this end we must preach the gospel."

He preached again five times in the week, going over the various subjects of the destruction of images, the Lord's supper in both kinds, the abolition of the mass, etc., pointing out that right things must be done in a right way. He laid great emphasis on the solemnity of the Lord's supper, and warned those who ought not to have partaken of it, but who had done so. This was a new work for Luther. Previously he had to arouse his hearers to energy and activity; now he had to quiet and calm the troubled waters of unholy zeal and fanaticism. The results were very beneficial. Gabriel Didymus, who had been one of the most violent, confessed he had been deceived. Carlstadt submitted for the sake of peace, but he was not convinced. He thought in reality that Luther was now stopping rather than helping on the work. The leaders of the prophets were all away from Wittenberg while this went on. But Stubner, one of the prophets, returned, gathered his followers around him and prepared to combat the question with Luther. Luther did not care to meet them, but he consented to do so. Stubner made a statement that he proposed to restore the church and reform the world. "Of all you have been saying," replied Luther gravely, "there is nothing that I see to be based on scripture." The meeting became then very stormy, and angry expressions passed. It ended with no good result, and that very day the prophets left Wittenberg.

Comparative peace being restored, at least at Wittenberg, Luther with the aid of Melancthon, devoted himself to finishing the translation of the New Testament. It was in a forward state, but needed revision. The printers were soon set to work, and on the 21st of September the New Testament was published in the German language.*

{* The Bible, or portions of it, had been translated into German before Luther's edition. The priests had discouraged their circulation, and their high price had placed them beyond the reach of the common people.} The importance of this work cannot be overestimated. Every simple Christian in Germany could now read the word of God for himself, and could judge what doctrines and practices were of God, and what were not. The edition of three thousand copies was soon sold, and another followed in December. It has been estimated that by the year 1533 more than fifty editions had been printed. Nothing could be a greater proof of how the word of God was needed and appreciated. The friends of the pope were greatly alarmed. The King of England (Henry VIII.) wrote to the Elector Frederick denouncing the work. Some of the princes issued orders for every copy to be delivered up to the magistrates, and it is said that in some places they were publicly burnt.

Only think what a system of religion that must be which can thrive only when the word of God is hidden! And yet in many ways we see the spread of that same system — Popery — in our own highly favoured land. Through the mercy of God the word of God is free here; but when the papal system cannot take away the Bible, it lays claim to possessing the exclusive power of interpreting it to the people. As soon as the New Testament was published, Luther proceeded with translating the Old. People were so anxious to obtain it that he had to publish it in parts as he could get it finished.

Though Duke George had prohibited the sale in his states, yet thousands of copies of the New Testament were in circulation therein. The papal party saw that they could not stop the spread of the scriptures; people would have them, therefore they brought out one of their own. It is said to have been the same as Luther's, but altered here and there.

Melanchthon took an active part in the Reformation and published a treatise on doctrine, called *Loci Communes*, "Common places." This book Luther greatly commended, and it became a sort of standard as to the doctrines taught by the Reformers.

About this time King Henry VIII. of England wrote a book against Luther, and in defence of the seven sacraments.* He despised Luther and was severe in his language. Doubtless the age in which he wrote partly accounts for this, but could anything justify his calling Luther an "infernal wolf," "a venomous serpent," "a limb of the devil," etc.? The King sent his book to the pope, with the message that he was also ready to attack the adherents of Luther with the sword as well as with the pen. The pope was gratified with such attention, and he conferred upon Henry the title of "DEFENDER OF THE FAITH," which the kings and queens of England have maintained to this day, and which explains the letters F.D. or FID. DEF. found on our money.

{* By "Sacraments" are meant, holy or sacred ordinances pertaining to the church. The seven insisted on by the Church of Rome are 1, Baptism, to which they attach regeneration. 2, The Mass, the name they give to the Lord's supper, and which they say is an unbloody sacrifice. 3, Confirmation, which is said to impart full growth and perfect spiritual strength. 4, Penance. This is the punishment or privation which their church imposes upon those who fall into sin, or who are not obedient to their church. 5, Marriage. 6, Holy Orders; that is that they, and they only, have the power to appoint and ordain to every office in the church. 7, Extreme Unction. This is the anointing with oil any one who is dying (upon his confession) in various parts of the body, which is supposed to communicate the grace of God and ensure their salvation.} The book was well received. Various editions were printed and many thousands were sold. The friends of Rome were in great joy that one so noble had so well taken up their cause.

Luther read the book, and felt irritated at the style in which he had been treated, as well as grieved that the truth should be attacked. He must answer it. He was exhorted not to answer, or to do it gently. Scripture — his own favourite book — said, "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle." (2 Tim. ii. 24.) Luther heeded it not. He was violent in the extreme as to Henry himself, but he manfully defended the truth that had been attacked. The court attendants of Henry were greatly incensed when the reply was received in England, and Thomas More proceeded to answer Luther. He was even more insulting than Henry had been.

Henry now wrote to both the Elector Frederick and the Dukes of Saxony against Luther, exhorting them to extinguish "the cursed sect of Luther. Shed no blood if it can be avoided; but if this heretical doctrine lasts, shed it without hesitation, in order that this abominable sect may disappear from under the heaven." Alas! that such advice should have gone from these shores against God's servant.

Frederick and his brother replied to Henry that they were in expectation of matters being settled by a future General Council. In the meantime, by the spread of the scriptures and other books and by preaching, the truth was rapidly spreading over Germany. In December 1521 Pope Leo X. had

died suddenly, and Cardinal Tortosa, an old man, but "whom everybody regarded as a saint" had been chosen as his successor, under the title of Adrian VI. He lived in a very simple manner, and gave much to the poor. He admitted that a reform was needed in the church, but advocated its being done little by little. In 1522 the Diet met at Nuremberg, when there was a great outcry for the death of Luther. But there was again the counter cry — The abuses in the church; when will you rectify the abuses? And a demand again arose for a General Council. The pope was indignant at this, and his friends dreaded the voice of the people being heard in a General Council. The pope wrote a very angry letter to the Elector Frederick, and took up the dangerous ground that the priests should be obeyed although their conduct was bad, quoting the passage of scripture, "Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not after their works," overlooking the fact that in this passage the scribes and Pharisees were in question, and what they said was the law as given by God; but the priests now ordered that which was not in scripture at all, indeed contrary to it.

We give the last part of the pope's letter. "In the name of the Almighty God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, of whom I am vicegerent on earth, I warn that thou wilt be judged in this world and be cast into the lake of everlasting fire in that which is to come. Repent and be converted. Both swords are impending over thine head — the sword of the empire and that of the papal authority." Notice the audacity and profanity of the pope calling himself "Christ's vicegerent on earth," a title which all the popes assumed, no matter how wicked they might be. The Elector Frederick was thus threatened by the pope and the Emperor, from whom he also had received a most insulting letter. Frederick sent to consult the leaders of the Reformation. Though he greatly desired peace, he thought he might yet have to draw his sword in defence of the gospel, forgetting the passage that "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matt. xxvi. 52.) The Reformers wisely advised the Elector not to think of fighting. Still Luther was greatly moved. "The sword of civil war," said he, "is impending over kings. They are bent on destroying Luther; but Luther is bent on saving them; Christ lives and reigns, and I shall reign with Him."

18 Chapter 18. Persecution Breaks Out — A.D. 1522-1525.

Chapter 18.

Persecution Breaks Out — A.D. 1522-1525. The threatened storm burst at length in some places. At Antwerp the truth had been received, and was preached. But the evangelical monks were obliged to flee. Henry Voes, John Esch, and Lambert Thorn were discovered and thrown into prison. Lambert Thorn was appalled at death, and begged time to consider what he would do; Voes and Esch faithfully confessed Christ. They were delivered to the secular arm, as it was called, and then to the executioner.

They were bound to the stake. The confessor drew near and said, "Once more we ask you if you will receive the christian faith?" "We believe in the christian church," said they, "but not in your church." Half an hour was allowed to elapse: it was hoped that the sight of the stake and the faggots would have appalled these young men. But no, they resolved to die for the name of Jesus Christ, and began to sing psalms. The fire was lit, and thus died, rejoicing, the first martyrs of the gospel in the time of Luther. Satan was again outwitted. He thought to stay the current of truth by stopping the voices of some; whereas it was the means of spreading it the more. Men saw that there was something real in such faith, and the confidence of the martyrs stirred up the failing courage of others. "Wherever Aleandro lights a pile," remarked Erasmus, "there it seems as if he now sowed heretics."

Luther was much moved. He thanked God for the courage of the martyrs. "I am bound with you in your bonds," said he; "your dungeons and your burnings my soul takes part in. All of us are with you in spirit; and the Lord is above it all."

Luther wrote a hymn on the occasion of their death, and soon that hymn was sung throughout the land. We give a translation: —

Flung to the heedless winds,Or on the waters cast,Their ashes shall be watched,And gathered at the last.And from that scattered dust,Around us and abroad,Shall spring a plenteous seedOf witnesses for God.Jesus hath now receivedTheir latest living breath —Yet vain is Satan's boastOf victory in their death.Still — still though dead, they speak,And, trumpet-tongued, proclaimTo many a wakening land,The one availing name.

Persecution was further stayed for the time by the death of Pope Adrian. He was so "good" in the sense of being strictly moral that the Romans were overjoyed at his death, and suspended a crown of flowers at his physician's door, with the writing, "To the saviour of his country." The pope had been too strict with those who desired to do as they pleased, so that they praised his physician for not saving his life! Such was Rome.

Julio de Medici was the next pope. He was a very different sort of man from Adrian. There was no hope now of Rome reforming itself: he thought only of what would enrich himself. He despatched Cardinal Campeggio to Germany. The Diet again met at Nuremberg in January 1525. The

Emperor was incensed against the Elector Frederick, and determined to crush him. It was resolved that the executive powers of the empire should all be changed. This was a blow at Frederick. Filled with grief, he left the Diet.

Campeggio demanded of the Diet that the edict of Worms should be enforced against the Reformers. "And pray," asked some, "what has become of the memorial of grievances presented to the pope by Germany?" Campeggio said three different memorials had reached Rome, and they did not know which was the official one. The Diet agreed to carry out the edict of Worms but added to it these words, "as far as possible," which left it free for some not to do it at all.

Moreover the Diet again pressed the necessity of calling a General secular Council, and at length in spite of Rome settled that this council should meet in November in Spire, "to regulate all questions of religion," and the states were to request their divines to prepare the various subjects to be discussed at that meeting. The pope was much incensed, and he and Campeggio sought to sow discord among the German princes. If they would not be at peace with Rome, they should not be at peace among themselves. Campeggio called a meeting at Ratisbon of those he thought staunch for Rome, and sought to unite them together to form a league in her favour. They met, and resolved to do all they could to crush the Reformation. They proceeded at once to act. At Vienna there was a citizen named Gaspard Tauber, who had written against the papacy. He was now seized, and ordered to retract. Whether he promised to do so, or whether they misunderstood him, is doubtful, but when he was summoned publicly to retract, he declared he would sooner die than deny the gospel. He was beheaded and afterwards burnt.

Another, at Buda in Hungary, a bookseller, was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and had distributed the New Testament and the writings of Luther. They bound the good man to a stake, and piled his books about him, and set them on fire. He died rejoicing. At other places great and fearful persecution was carried on. Some were imprisoned, and some were hanged; and some of the preachers had their tongues nailed to posts, so that they might tear themselves away, deprived of the power to preach. The case of Henry Zuphten is sad to relate. He had escaped from Antwerp and went to preach at Bremen, at a place called Mehdorf in the Dittmarches. The pastor at first tried to stop his preaching; but here he failed. He took his vengeance thereon. He caused the bells to be rung at night-fall and assembled the peasants, about five hundred. Then, to give them courage and stifle conscience, he tapped three butts of beer. When all were elated he led them on to where the good man slept. He was dragged out of his bed, and, undressed as he was, hurried through the streets in the frost and ice. They reached the heath, where they gathered the faggots and applied the light. But the wood would not burn, and for two long hours he stood there exposed to their fury. At length the wood was alight and they threw him on the pile, but he rolled off, when one with a club struck him dead. They then put him on the wood and he was consumed. Thus was killed this faithful man. His crime was preaching the gospel; and they who put him to death did it in the name of religion! It could not have been the religion of Jesus Christ.

19 Chapter 19.Revolt of the Peasants — A.D. 1525.

Chapter 19.

Revolt of the Peasants — A.D. 1525.

While Satan was thus stirring up a fiery persecution in the Catholic states, he was also busy in another way among those nominally attached to the gospel.

We have already seen that the prophets, called also Anabaptists,* were troublesome before Luther left the Wartburg. These now again came into prominence, mixing with their creed certain grievances respecting the state. They drew up a declaration of twelve articles. They claimed a right to choose their own pastors, demanding also the abolition of small tithes and the taxes on inheritance; the right to hunt, fish, cut wood, etc. It is important to notice that this was not simply a movement for the sake of the gospel, it was mixed up with politics; with the question of hunting, fishing, etc., though strangely enough they put a passage of scripture to each of their articles.

{* This name is from ana again, and baptistees a baptist, and was given to them because they held that those who were baptized in infancy before they had faith, ought to be baptized again. These Anabaptists must not be associated with those now known as Baptists, though the latter also hold that faith should precede baptism.}

Luther and Melanchthon were questioned as to their judgment of the movement. The prophets professed to be moved by the Spirit; indeed this was their cry, "The Spirit, the Spirit." Both Luther and Melanchthon denounced it. Luther admitted that there might be some justice in some of their twelve demands; but he denounced the revolt as of the devil. "The christian conflict," said he, "is not to be carried on by sword or gun, but by endurance and the cross. Christ their Captain would not have His servants smite with the sword; He was hanged upon a tree."

It was of no avail. The peasants met in large numbers and took up any rude arms they could find to enforce their demands. They were opposed at Weinsberg in Wurtemberg by Count Louis of Helfenstein, and seventy of his men. But these were soon overpowered. They were surrounded by an army of pikes which closed in upon them. The wife of Helfenstein, a daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, with an infant at her breast, begged for the life of her husband, but none were spared, the infant being wounded in its mother's arms.

Thus had these fanatics, under the cry of "The Spirit," added murder to their revolt. It was one thing to be set at liberty from the thralldom of the pope, and another to believe the gospel, and be under the yoke of Christ. These people had thrown off the one, but had not bowed to the other.

Luther was cut to the quick. The enemies of the Reformation were loud in their accusations. Here was some full ripe fruit of his doctrines! This was through throwing off the power of Rome, etc.; while, on the other hand, the peasants would not listen to Luther. This grieved him much, but it proved they were not followers of him, and this was not a fruit of his teaching. But the revolution spread rapidly. The people of the Black Forest chose John Muller of Bulgenbach for their leader.

They went from village to village, proclaiming the twelve articles, and demanding the adherence of all the inhabitants. If any refused they were banished. Wherever the prophets went they smashed the images and the crucifixes.

Still the revolution spread. Counts and rulers were for the time compelled to side with the rebels, or fly from their dominions. And such was the success of the insurrection that they began to plan a new empire. Taxes were to be abolished; the Emperor was to be supreme ruler, but all other rulers were to give up their authority. The Emperor drew the sword, and his general George Truchsess marched at the head of an army to oppose the peasants. On May 7 he repulsed them at Beblingen, and marched to Weinsberg, where the Count of Helfenstein had been murdered. This place he burnt to the ground, as a lasting memorial of the atrocities of the peasants. The army of Truchsess was joined by that of the Elector Palatine and the Elector of Treves, and the peasants were everywhere routed. They were but ill armed, and the cannon of the army made rapid slaughter in their ranks. It has been estimated that fifty thousand were slain. But while this was being done in Southern Germany, Munzer went to Mulhausen, and stirred up another revolt. Here again it spread rapidly. In the districts of Mansfeld, Stolberg, Schwarzburg, Hesse, and Brunswick the peasantry all rose. The Elector Frederick was pained at the thought of taking up the sword, and indeed refused. But Philip of Hesse armed at once, and so did other of the surrounding princes. They quickly surrounded the peasants, who flew to a hill, and made a rampart with their waggons. Munzer had cast some cannons, but had not yet obtained any powder. The princes were loth to shed blood needlessly, and they therefore tried to come to terms with the rebels. But Munzer prevented this being done, declaring that if his followers held out they should that day see the mighty arm of God in the destruction of their enemies. Just at this time a rainbow appeared in the clouds, and the peasants, whose standard was a rainbow, believed that this was a token from God. Munzer also, to prevent the peasants giving in, cruelly put to death the gentleman sent peacefully to treat with them.

Such treachery drew forth vengeance. The army attacked the camp of rebels, who began to say, "Come, Holy Spirit." The cannon soon knocked to pieces their battlements, and made large gaps in their ranks. The peasants were not used to war, and fled in all directions, and hundreds were slain. The army entered Frankenhausen after the battle. A soldier had reached the top of a house where he found a man crouched down, hiding himself. "Are you one of the rebels?" said he: and seeing the man had a writing case, the soldier took it, and therein found letters addressed to THOMAS MUNZER. "Is that your name?" said he. "No," said the coward. But he was not believed. It was he — the Thomas Munzer who had stirred up the revolt. He was carried before Duke George and the Landgrave, whom he told he was justified in revolting because the princes opposed the gospel! Thus he added hypocrisy to his wickedness. He was beheaded, and the insurrection was quelled. To the states of the Elector Frederick the war did not reach. In his states there had been neither executions nor punishment. The gospel had thus far prevailed.

It was necessary for two reasons to bring into Luther's history the revolt of the peasants. One reason was that though the friends of Rome on every hand declared that the whole calamity was due to Luther and the doctrines he taught, it is clear that the charge was entirely false. Luther preached and wrote against it all through, and more than once he left Wittenberg and went into districts where discontent was rising into revolt, and did all he could to prevent it. The other reason was to shew how important it is to keep the distinction between spiritual and political freedom. It

may be that many saw in throwing off the yoke of the pope nothing but the latter, it was right that they should be undeceived, and that they should learn that the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is not of this world, but is righteousness, peace, etc. But other troubles were in store for Luther. Before the revolt of the peasants had been quite put down, the aged Elector Frederick the Wise had breathed his last. Feeling his end approaching, he destroyed a will he had made commending his soul to the Virgin Mary, "the mother of God," and made another, in which he declared his belief that "he was redeemed by the precious blood of his beloved Saviour." His chaplain Spalatin was with him to the last. Strange to say, that though the Elector Frederick and Luther had had so much to do with each other, and had in a sense worked together, they had never seen each other except at a distance. John, the brother of Frederick, succeeded him as Elector of Saxony.

20 Chapter 20.Luther Marries — A.D. 1525.

Chapter 20.

Luther Marries — A.D. 1525.

Just at this time it was that Luther married Catharine Bora.*

{* The Chronicles of Wittenberg contain the following items in the year 1525:"xlii. Grosch. paid for Dr. Martin when, at the request of the Council of the district, he returned to Wittenberg from his Isle of Patmos."vii. Stub., xx. Grosch. for Dr. Martin, on the occasion of his marriage, taken from the treasury of the hospital."i. Stub., vii. Grosch., iii. Heller, for a Suabian hood, as a new year's gift to Dame Catharine Bora, wife of Dr. Martin."xvi. Grosch., vi. Stub. for a hogshead of Einbeck beer, for the use of Dr. Martin, on Tuesday after St. John."ii. Stub. xvi. Grosch. for wine taken by Dr. Martin from the cellars of the city."A Groschen was equal to about three-halfpence; a Stuber, about a half-penny; a Heller, about a farthing. } In the year 1523, the truth had penetrated a monastery of Nimptsch, near Grimma, and nine of the nuns resolved that they would no longer live there in uselessness and idleness. They wrote to their parents telling them of their resolution; but their parents refused to listen to them or to sanction such a step as leaving the convent. They thereon resolved to leave, and trust to God for guidance and to find a home for them. Two christian men offered their services, which were gladly accepted. The nuns quietly left the convent, and entered a waggon provided for them. But where should they go? They knew not. Well, they would go to Luther, and accordingly proceeded thither and drew up at his residence.

Luther was surprised, but pleased. He wished all the cloisters were emptied, but he declared that he had had no hand in these nuns leaving. Doors were opened in various families, and the nine found homes.

Catharine Bora was one of these nuns; she found a home in the house of the Burgomaster of Wittenberg. After a time Luther proposed to marry her. It was a bold step. For a monk it was forbidden; but forbidden by whom? The pope and the Catholic church. But God had spoken and said that "marriage is honourable in all" (Heb. xiii. 4), and "forbidding to marry" was a sign of the apostasy. (1 Tim. iv. 3.) Luther declared he would act the truths he taught, and on the 13th of June, 1525, he was married to Catharine Bora. Pomeranus, whom Luther called the pastor, pronounced the benediction. The marriage of Luther caused tremendous commotion among the friends of Rome. It was setting their rules at defiance, and it brought down a shower of abuse on the heads of the married pair. A long time before, Luther had preached in favour of priests marrying, but he did not then intend to marry. But now his father pressed him, and he believed the time had come for his doing so.

He made constant prayer that he might be guided aright, and at length concluded it was God's will that he should marry. "By marrying," said he, "I shall break entirely with the institutions of popery. I shall encourage timid men to renounce their detestable errors. I will reserve nothing of my life in the papacy. If I take a wife, it is not to live with her long, for my end is near; but I wish to leave an

unimpeachable confirmation of what I have preached here on earth."

Luther was forty-two, and Catharine twenty-six when they married. The marriage was a happy one. Luther had been the last to leave the monastery. He abode there after all the others had left, but now that he was married he left also, and sent off the keys to the Elector John. But John returned them to Luther, and made him a present of the monastery as a house for himself and his wife. Luther accepted it and went to reside there.

Catharine was very fond of her husband, and when he was dejected, which he still was at times, she would comfort him by passages of scripture. She thus became a true help-meet to him. He used to call her his Ketha, and at times My Lord Catharine.

They had in all six children, and their great desire was to bring them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Luther thoroughly enjoyed himself in his family. When worn out with his work he would take his flute and sing one of the hymns he had composed for use in the church; or calling his wife and children round him they would all sing together. "There is nothing sweeter," he used to say, "nothing more beautiful than a happy marriage, where the husband and wife live together in peace and concord. It is the best gift of heaven next to the knowledge of God and of His word."

He was also fond of his garden, and when his brain was over-wrought, or he felt harassed by Satan, he would seek relief with the spade. But here his thoughts were busy. Bending over a violet he would say, "Poor violet, what a perfume you exhale; but how much sweeter it would have been if Adam had not sinned! How I admire your tints, O rose, but which would have been more brilliant but for the fault of the first man. Nature does not shew its ingratitude like man; for the murmur of the streams, the perfumes of the gardens, the breath of the winds, the rustling of the leaves, are so many hymns chanted to the Creator; whilst man, made after the image of God, forgets Him entirely since his sin!"

Luther was stern in his discipline with the children. On one occasion he would not allow his son John to see him for three days. His wife was distressed and interceded for the boy, and some of his friends did the same; but without effect. "I would rather my son were dead," said Luther, "than badly brought up. I will not forgive the boy until he has written me a letter humbling himself and asking for pardon." On the other hand, he could fully enter into the thoughts and pursuits of his children. On one occasion he discovered that his servant had put up a net to catch the birds, so Luther wrote a complaint of the birds thus: —

"To our very dear lord Martin Luther, —

"We, the thrushes, chaffinches, linnets, goldfinches and other honourable birds, who will have to pass by Wittenberg this Autumn, take the liberty to inform you that one Wolfgang your servant has had the audacity, out of dislike to us, to set up a net in order to deprive us of the liberty of flying in the air, and of picking up from the ground the little seeds that God has given us. Moreover he seeks in this way to take our lives, we having never done him any harm. For this reason we pray you to restrain your servant from such acts.

"Given in our aerial abode, under the trees, with our ordinary seal."

"Behold the fowls of the air: they sow not, neither do they reap, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them."

Luther was poor, but he did not speak of it except to laugh at it among his friends. But it grieved him when he could not relieve cases of need as he would have wished. One day a student came to him with a tale of poverty and distress. He called to his wife and told her to give to the poor man some money. "I have got none," said she, "not a farthing." Luther at once seized a gold cup and gave it to the student, bidding him sell it and relieve his wants. "A pewter mug will serve me," said Luther.

Luther's marriage was a great event in the Reformation. Men at first began to seclude themselves in dens and caves because of surrounding evil. They had a good motive but were mistaken in doing this. If Christians, their light was to be as on a hill, and not hidden as under a bushel. Others with less piety imitated them, until monasticism had grown up into a great but evil system. The three vows were easily taken; but, except the one of obedience, were not carried out. Luther had entered the convent in search for holiness; but he had seen enough to make him view with abhorrence any one, male or female, enter a monastery. He discouraged it in every way. He now sought to live in his family, among his fellow-Christians, as one of themselves, and yet with their good as much at heart as ever, to spend and be spent for the cause of God and His truth.

21 Chapter 21. Diets of Augsburg and Spire — A.D. 1525, 1526.

Chapter 21.

Diets of Augsburg and Spire — A.D. 1525, 1526.

Soon after Luther's marriage the Emperor summoned a Diet at Augsburg. He had, on the clamour of the pope, prohibited the contemplated General Council at Spire, but now another Diet must be held. It met on December 11. But nothing was settled, except to continue to carry out the resolution of Nuremberg, and in the May following they would meet at Spire and go fully into the questions of "holy faith, public rights, and the general peace."

Philip of Hesse warmly espoused the cause of the Reformation. He felt sure that the Emperor was plotting mischief, and he solicited the Elector John and others to join in an alliance for self-defence if attacked. The Elector John received the proposition with reserve. This was caused by the adverse judgment of Luther and Melancthon. Luther maintained that for the gospel we should trust in God only, and not in alliances and the sword. Melancthon feared that an alliance would only hasten what they all dreaded. The Landgrave however was not to be put off. On the 12th of June, 1526, a meeting was called at Magdeburg, where the Elector, his son, Dukes Philip, Ernest, Otho, and Francis of Brunswick, and Lunenburg, Duke Henry of Mecklenburg, Prince Wolf of Anhalt, Counts Albert and Gebhard of Mansfeld, formed an alliance to defend God's "holy and eternal word" by their goods, their lives, their resources, and the arms of their subjects, at the same time declaring that they trusted not in their armies but solely in the Almighty power of the Lord, of whom they desired to be but the instruments.

Humanly speaking, and if the success of the gospel had depended on human means, this union had not been formed too soon; the friends of Rome vainly thought that in quelling the revolt of the peasants a deathblow had been struck at the Reformation; but instead of that they everywhere witnessed it raising its head with renewed life and vigour. It was evidently growing. It must be opposed, and no time so suitable as now before it could still further increase. Duke Henry of Brunswick, Duke George of Saxony, and the Cardinal Elector Albert had met at Halle and written to the Emperor to take energetic measures against "the doctrine of Luther." Henry of Brunswick was not satisfied with this: he would go and use his influence with the Emperor. He could not have arrived at a more opportune time. The Emperor had just concluded with Francis the treaty of peace at Madrid. Francis had offered to defray half the expenses of a war against either the Turks or the heretics, as Luther and his friends were called. The Emperor determined on energetic measures.

Luther saw the storm that was gathering, and he called on his friends to give themselves to prayer. "Let the people know," said he, "that they are at this hour exposed to the edge of the sword, and the rage of the devil: let them pray." The Diet met at Spire* on June 25, 1526. The friends of Rome were full of hope. The friends of the gospel were not abashed. They requested to have a place for worship assigned them during the Diet; but this was denied. They therefore held meetings at their

various houses.

{* An ancient town of Bavaria, situated at the union of the Spirebach and the Rhine.}

Again came up the question of abuses in the Romish church, and some of the friends of Rome were the loudest in pointing them out. The friends of the gospel need not trouble themselves about them; they had virtually left that church and all its abuses. The Diet formed themselves into committees to point out the abuses.

They drew up their reports, and great was the consternation when these reports were read. Never had the papal system been so freely handled. The abuses were plain and unmistakeable. There was no difficulty in making a list of them: the difficulty was not to make it too long. In the meantime Spire was well supplied with tracts by Luther. They were circulated everywhere, and those who visited the town carried them away with them.

Rome for the time seemed to be slumbering, at least at Spire; but it now awoke, and as its cause was bad, it made up for it by noise and clamour. The friends of Rome demanded of Ferdinand, the Emperor's brother and who represented him, that he should insist upon the edict of Worms being enforced. Ferdinand took courage, and on August 3, published the decree drawn up four months previously in favour of the edict of Worms. Persecution was to begin at once. The Elector and other friends of the gospel were indignant, and determined to leave the Diet; but on considering the date of the decree they saw less cause for alarm. It was dated, as we have said, four months previously, and at that time the Emperor and the pope were good friends. They had since quarrelled, and the pope afterwards even threatened the Emperor with excommunication. Charles wrote to his brother Ferdinand, "Let us suspend the edict of Worms: let us bring back Luther's partisans by mildness."

Thus did God allow these enemies of His truth to quarrel among themselves and the threatening storm dispersed. The Diet agreed to let each prince carry out in his own states that which he thought right, and "in a manner so as to be able to render an account to God and the Emperor."

22 Chapter 22. The Sack of Rome — A.D. 1527.

Chapter 22. The Sack of Rome — A.D. 1527. In a few days the Emperor, who had been intent on crushing the Reformation, was enlisting soldiers in Germany to go to war against the pope! Thus had God in a marvellous way confounded the counsel of the wicked, and given his people peace. The army led by that old General Frundsberg, who encouraged Luther as he went into the Diet of Worms, proceeded to Rome and spite of all resistance they took the city. They waited till midnight trying to get the pope to come to terms of peace; but it was useless. As midnight drew on the soldiers grew impatient, and disbanded, and commenced the event known in history as "the sack of Rome." The soldiers dispersed all over the city, and pillaged everything they could lay hands on worth their taking. The soldiers from Germany visited the churches, and carried off the chalices,* the pyxes, and silver remonstrances, and they clothed their camp-boys in the vestments they found in the churches. For ten days the "sack" continued; a large booty was collected, and from five to eight thousand victims fell by the sword.

{* The chalices were the cups used at the Mass; the Pyx is a box in which the Roman Catholics keep the consecrated wafer; a Remonstrance is a plate with an opening in the centre, in which the wafer is placed to be shewn (Latin remonstrare) to the people.}

Clement and his cardinals had taken refuge in the castle of Saint Angelo; but he was in great fear of being blown into the air by the invaders. And though he had formed an alliance with the king of France and the Venetians, and made the King of England preserver and protector, no one came to his relief. At length he capitulated: he renounced his alliance against the Emperor, and agreed to remain prisoner until Rome had paid the army four hundred thousand ducats, equal to £185,000. This treatment of the pope made manifest the true character of the Emperor. At times he could talk of the sacred office of the pope, but in taking Rome he had treated the city in a way it had never before been treated, even by the Barbarians. This drew from the whole of Christendom a loud cry of execration upon the head of Charles, and then he declared that he did not know that his general was going to enter Rome. He and his court went into mourning, and he had prayers said for the deliverance of the pope! a deliverance which he could have effected at once by an order to his generals. On the other hand, the friends of the gospel stood in amazement to see the judgment of God. Here was a man held to be most sacred, and a city revered by all the Catholics, yet by them he was imprisoned and the city stripped. The wrath of man was to have fallen on the gospel — it fell on the papacy. The Evangelicals could but say that it was the Lord who was fighting for them against their enemies.

"Leave to God's sovereign sway
To choose and to command,
So shalt thou wondering own His way
How wise, how strong His hand;
Far, far above thy thought
His counsel shall appear,
When He the work hath fully wrought
That caused thee needless fear.
Thou seest our weakness, Lord,
Our hearts are known to thee;
O lift thou up the sinking hand,
Confirm the feeble knee.
Let us in life, in death,
Thy stedfast truth declare;
And publish with our latest breath,
Thy love and guardian care."

23 Chapter 23. Peace Disturbed — A.D. 1527, 1528.

Chapter 23.

Peace Disturbed — A.D. 1527, 1528. This quarrel of the Emperor with the pope gave the churches rest, during which time the word of God was widely scattered, and the preaching of the gospel made progress. In the early part of 1528 their peace was disturbed. A man named Otho of Pack, but called Pack for shortness, Vice-Chancellor of Duke George of Saxony, assured the Landgrave of Hesse that a secret league had been drawn up against the Reformers, and offered to shew him a copy of the document. For this purpose the Landgrave went to Dresden. Pack told him that he could not shew him the original, but produced a copy. It had all the appearance of being genuine. There were the arms of the State and the impression of the official seals. It was signed by King Ferdinand, the Electors of Mentz and of Brandenburg, Duke George of Saxony, the Dukes of Bavaria, the Bishops of Salzburg, Wurtzburg, and Bamberg. The Elector of Saxony was to be called upon to deliver up Luther with all his adherents. If the Elector refused, his states were to be invaded, and he and his heirs for ever dispossessed. The states of Philip of Hesse were also to be invaded. Philip paid to Pack four thousand florins, and agreed to make it up to ten thousand florins if he procured the original document. Philip took a copy and hastened away.

Full of indignation and alarm he went to the Elector John and informed him of the conspiracy, shewing him the copy of the document. The Elector was confounded. They resolved to arm at once in self-defence, and to call upon the other princes known to be favourable to the Reformation. As soon as Luther heard of it, he and his colleagues wrote to the Elector, begging him only to act in self-defence, and to inform the Emperor at once of the plot. Philip strongly advocated not simply self-defence, but that the states of those who signed the document should be invaded. Luther and Melanchthon resorted to prayer. Philip of Hesse gave way, and waited to be attacked. In the meantime he sent copies of the document to Duke George, the Dukes of Bavaria, and the Emperor's representative. He asked the Dukes to renounce their wicked designs. The Dukes were amazed, and declared that the document was an impudent forgery. Whoever had said that he had seen the original was a liar and a scoundrel. Philip saw at once that he had been deceived; and indeed he had: for the whole was now believed to be a forgery by Pack. He was obliged to fly from Duke John, and he came to Hesse. The Landgrave seized him, and cast him into prison. Envoys from various of the princes called him before them, when he maintained that the original had certainly existed at Dresden. The Landgrave banished him from his states, and he took refuge in Belgium. Duke George made a demand for him. He was given up, tortured, and then beheaded.

Luther, and many others, believed that though the document presented by Pack had been drawn up by him, yet that he had a foundation for it in the words and the intentions of the Catholic princes. This unhappy affair greatly increased the ill feeling between the friends of the pope and the friends of the gospel. But no movement was taken until another Diet could be held. This was arranged to be held at Spire in March.

24 Chapter 24. Protestantism — 1529.

Chapter 24.

Protestantism — 1529.

Matters had greatly altered since the sack of Rome. The pope and Emperor were again great friends. A treaty of peace had been concluded on June 29, 1528, at Barcelona, based on the destruction of the heresy of Luther. The Emperor wrote a threatening letter to the Elector John, and everywhere the friends of the pope proudly lifted up their heads. Now Luther and his heresy were certainly going to be crushed.

Melanchthon accompanied the Elector to the Diet; but they were met with frowns everywhere. The arrangement of 1526 was declared to be annulled by the Emperor, and energetic measures were called for. The majority of the Diet tried to take a middle course, namely, that everything should remain as it was, but there must be no efforts made to spread the doctrines of the Reformation! The friends of the gospel met together for consultation. How could they hide the light committed to them? Had not God said, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature?" Must they not obey God rather than man?

They decided to reject the proposition at all cost. But the friends of the pope were equally resolute. They called before the Diet the representatives of the free cities,* and threatened them. These disposed of, Ferdinand declared he would hear no more: the proposition must be made into a decree, and the friends of the Reformation must submit. The Elector John and those agreeing with him retired for consultation. But Ferdinand said that he had received his orders from the Emperor. "I have executed it," said he; "all is over;" and he left the Diet. They sent a message intreating him to return; but he refused.

{* Called Imperial Free Cities because they were not under the control of any of the German princes.} The Reformers drew up a protest (from whence arose the name of PROTESTANTS), and presented it to the Diet. It spoke moderately, but firmly. They could not deny the Lord Jesus Christ or reject His holy word. This word is the only truth. The Lord's supper was "becomingly administered" in their states, and they could not enforce any edict against those who did this. They protested against any decree contrary to God or His holy word. The protest was dated April 19, 1529. As soon as the protest was delivered, the Elector and his friends declared that on the morrow they would leave Spire (though they did not leave so soon). But before leaving, a deputation waited on Ferdinand, and presented the protest to him. He at first received it, but then desired to return it. The deputation declined; and Ferdinand insisted. At length out of courtesy the deputation received the protest from his hands, but boldly laying it on a table they left the room. The Diet met again and ratified the edict as it had been previously proposed, irrespective of the protest. "All that remains for us to do," said Melanchthon, "is to call upon the Son of God," and he hastened back to Wittenberg much dejected.

Luther had not been at Spire, and had not drawn up the protest; and when he read it he did not think there was much force in it. But Protestants have often looked back to that protest with a sort of veneration. From that time to this the mass of those professing to be Christians have been divided into Catholics and Protestants. The Greek church, which took no part in the protest, is generally classed with the Catholics, though they are not Roman Catholics, nor do they acknowledge the pope. The friends of Rome were now determined to root out the heresy of Protestantism. The pope loudly called for it, and the Emperor determined to carry it out. Philip of Hesse again thought of inviting all the Protestant princes into a league for self-defence. To be included in this league he named some of the Swiss. To this union Luther objected. We must now look at the reason why.

25 Chapter 25.Luther And Zwingli — A.D. 1530.

Chapter 25.

Luther And Zwingli — A.D. 1530.

Luther would have nothing to do with Zwingli. Zwingli was an eminent Swiss reformer, and he desired to be united with the German reformers. Luther's objection was principally because he believed Zwingli held erroneous doctrines on the Lord's supper. The Roman Catholics hold that after the priest has pronounced certain words over the bread and wine, they become changed into the actual body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is called transubstantiation.* They also hold that both the body and blood of Christ are present in the bread which alone is given to the recipient, who thus partakes of the body and blood of Christ altogether independently of whether he has faith or not.

{*From trans, across, over, and substantia, substance — a change of substance.}

Luther did not believe this; for he believed that there must be faith in the receiver, and then along with the bread and wine there was the presence of the actual body and blood of Christ. This was called consubstantiation.* {* From con, with, substantia, substance — the body and blood of Christ is with the bread and wine.}

Zwingli believed that there must be faith in the receiver; and that by faith he partook of Christ in partaking of the bread and wine which represented the body and the blood; but that the actual body and blood of Christ were not present. They were then called "Sacramentarians" by those who differed from them.

Thus was there this sad separation among these Christians. Luther charged Zwingli with heresy, and refused to have any communion with him. Indeed he was most violent, and his language shocking.

Unquestionably in this Luther was wrong. He had seen the doctrine in Carlstadt and the Anabaptists, and that had perhaps so set him against it, that he recoiled with horror from it ever afterwards. The Landgrave however was not to be put off. Luther and Zwingli must meet and discuss the subject. All sorts of excuses were made, though indeed there was danger in their travelling to any place where they could meet. It was arranged they should meet at Marburg.* {* A city in Upper Hesse, forty-eight miles south-west of Cassel.}

Zwingli set out, and by travelling by-roads, forests, and secluded paths he arrived safely, accompanied by a Hessian guard. Luther arrived the next day, accompanied by Melanchthon, Cruciger and Jonas. Philip invited both to the castle and entertained them well. Others were also invited — whose names have been handed down as Reformers — amongst them the more noted were OEcolumpadius and Bucer.* Carlstadt begged to be present; but he was refused — it was supposed through Luther's influence.

{* OEcolampadius (whose name was Hausschein) was professor and preacher at Basel in Switzerland; Bucer (whose name was Martin Kuhhorn) was teacher of divinity at Strasburg: in 1548 he strongly condemned a compromise drawn up by the Emperor called the Interim, after which he came to England and taught theology at Cambridge, where he died in 1551. In Queen Mary's reign his remains were exhumed and burnt.}

Private conferences were held before the public one — OEcolampadius with Luther, and Zwingli with Melancthon. There were other subjects in dispute; but the question of what is called the "real presence" was the chief one; that is, whether or not the body and blood of Christ are really present with the bread and wine at the Lord's supper. On Saturday, October 2, they met, in the presence of Philip and his court, and a company of nobles, deputies, and theologians. Great interest was taken in the meeting, and great hopes were cherished of its success.

Luther and OEcolampadius began the discussion. They had been reminded that the object before them was to re-establish union. But Luther in a most determined manner declared, "I differ from my adversaries with regard to the doctrine of the Lord's supper, and I shall always differ from them. Christ has said, 'This is my body.' Let them shew me that a body is not a body. I reject reason, common sense, carnal arguments, and mathematical proofs. God is above mathematics."

OEcolampadius replied that the words "This is my body" were a figure, similarly to the words "that Rock was Christ," "I am the vine," etc.

Luther admitted there were figures in the Bible, but contended that "This is my body" was not a figure.

OEcolampadius quoted "The flesh profiteth nothing;" it was only that which we fed on spiritually and by faith was of any avail. This and a great deal more was said — the same being enforced by Zwingli. But it was all of no use. Luther had started with the resolution that he would always differ from them, and in such a spirit — an unteachable spirit, and a dogged determination to hold to his own opinion — he could not, he would not be convinced. On entering the hall he had taken a piece of chalk and written on the cloth that covered the table the words *hoc est corpus meum*, "this is my body," and when he was close pressed he would stand and point to these words. There was his answer; "The devil himself," he said, "shall not drive me from that."

Again and again they returned to the subject. OEcolampadius quoted another text, "We know not Jesus Christ after the flesh." (2 Cor. v. 16.) But it was of no use. Luther at length caught up the velvet cover on which he had written the words *Hoc est Corpus Meum* and held it before their faces. "See," said he, "see! this is our text. You have not driven us from it."

OEcolampadius saw it was of no use to continue the discussion, and was silent. The Landgrave, grieved at the thought that the conference should end thus, begged them to come to an understanding. Luther declared that there was only one way to do this — they must believe as he did. Zwingli was deeply moved and burst into tears.

Philip was loth to let them part thus. He still hoped that something might be done, and he invited them to his table. But it was useless. All ended in disagreement. They must part. There was a plague in the city, and all were anxious to leave; but most were loth to part without peace, if not unity of judgment.

"Let us confess our union in all things in which we agree," said Zwingli, "and as for the rest let us remember that we are brothers."

"Yes, yes," said Philip; "you agree. Give them a testimony of your unity, and recognize one another as brothers."

Zwingli, OEccolampadius, Bucer, and Hedio approached the German Reformers, and it was hoped they would part in love as brothers. But Luther repulsed them with the words, "You have a different spirit from ours." At length he agreed to own them as friends, but not as brothers and members of Christ's church! This was a fresh insult to the Swiss Christians; but they determined to receive this, if they could get nothing better. They would all be friends. A list of Articles of Faith was drawn up; in all of which they agreed except as to the "real presence." Luther seemed melted. He had drawn up these articles himself, and in them he says, "both the interested parties shall cherish more and more a truly christian charity for one another so far as conscience permits." They part good friends. The articles are sent to be printed.

Luther left; but he felt very dejected; his faith was very low, he feared he should never see his wife and children again. He felt tormented as by an evil spirit. But he safely reached Wittenberg, his family, and his friends. The result of the conference was that by the report being published, the Christians in Germany saw the doctrine of the Lord's supper as held by the Swiss, which had hitherto not been plainly before them, and many embraced it as the truth.

26 Chapter 26. The Protestant Confession at Augsburg — A.D. 1530.

Chapter 26. The Protestant Confession at Augsburg — A.D. 1530. The friends of the Romish church were in great expectation. The Emperor was going to visit the pope: surely some real action would now be made against the Protestants. This the pope tried to procure; but the Emperor saw it still answered his purpose to humble the Protestants by his friendship to the pope; and yet make the pope look up to him in hope that he might subdue the Protestants. At this time he was courting the favour of the pope. He desired to be crowned by Clement VII. as King of Lombardy. This took place with great pomp at Bologna, on February 22. And the Emperor determined to assume another crown as Emperor of the Romans. The pope anointed the Emperor with oil, presented him with a sceptre and then a sword, saying, "Make use of it in defence of the church against the enemies of the faith." The Protestants feared that evil would result from this friendship with the pope. Melancthon was filled with fear. Luther's faith revived. "Our enemies triumph," said he, "but ere long to perish." The Elector John proposed arming, and even preventing the Emperor from entering Germany. Philip of Hesse, young and headstrong, was overjoyed. Luther was consulted. He denounced it in toto. It was given up. The time drew near for the national convention and the Protestants prepared before hand the draft of a confession as to what it was essential to contend for. The Elector John had been threatened by the Emperor, and many feared for his safety if he ventured to Augsburg. But Luther infused courage into them by his own faith in God. He also composed a hymn for the occasion, which was sung by many and revived their drooping spirits. It said:

"With our own strength we nought can do, Destruction yawns on every side; He fights for us, our champion true, Elect of God to be our guide. What is His name? The anointed One, The God of armies He; Of earth and heaven the Lord alone — With Him, on field of battle won, Abideth victory."

It was thought best for Luther not to appear at Augsburg, but in order that he might be near at hand to be consulted if needs be, he was located at Coburg. The Elector John was the first to arrive at Augsburg. The Catholics were surprised that he ventured to come at all. He was followed by Philip of Hesse. They both succeeded in finding open doors for their preachers, and every day was the gospel preached to crowds of listeners. This greatly provoked the Catholics, who also had their preachers; but the priests were not used to preaching, and the gospel of God they could not preach for many did not know it. So the Catholics appealed to the Emperor to stop the preaching. He wrote to the Elector requesting him to have it stopped. The Elector consulted his theologians. Some advised him to yield, but others exhorted him to refuse in the politest terms he could. He answered, "As to the demand to suspend our preaching, nothing is proclaimed in it but the glorious truth of God, and never was it so necessary to us. We cannot therefore do without it." In the meantime Melancthon was hard at work on the Confession. He laboured at it night and day. He wanted it to be mild but yet true. When finished it was sent to Luther, to mark anything he did not approve of. He marked nothing. He approved of it as a whole but the style was so different from his that he could not have touched it without spoiling it. He prayed constantly for the success of the cause of truth. The Emperor arrived with great pomp, being met outside the city by all the Electors

and princes. He took the first opportunity of demanding that the preaching should be discontinued, but the Protestants again declared that they could not yield. The demand was waived. The next day was what is called "Corpus Christi,* when there is a procession, with a worshipping of the Host (the consecrated wafer) as it was called. The Emperor requested that the Protestant princes would join in this procession as usual. They declined to do so; but the Emperor insisted. He gave them till the next morning to decide.

{* Corpus Christi, "body of Christ," a festival of the church of Rome.}

They retired and called into counsel their friends. At midnight the Emperor, impatient, sent for their answer. "At present we require sleep," said the Elector, "to-morrow we will let you know." Spalatin was engaged in the night, preparing his answer. "The sacrament," said he, "was not instituted to be worshipped, as the Jews worshipped the brazen image. We are here to confess the truth, and not for the confirmation of abuses. Let us therefore stay away." This judgment confirmed the princes in their decision. In the morning by seven o'clock they repaired to the Emperor. "In the things of God, the commands of God Himself oblige me," said the Margrave of Brandenburg, who spoke for all, "to put aside all commandments of men." He was ready to suffer death if that was the penalty. He then presented the declaration. "We will not countenance by our presence," it said, "these impious human traditions which are opposed to the word of God."

"If you will not accompany his Majesty for the love of God," said Ferdinand, "do so at least for love of the Emperor; and, as vassals of the Empire, his Majesty commands you."

"An act of worship is in question," urged the princes; "our conscience forbids it."

"His Majesty desires to see whether you will obey him or not," said Ferdinand. The Emperor quitted the hall, hoping the princes would follow, but they returned to their palaces. The Emperor walked in the procession with a taper in his hand, his head shorn like a priest's. But comparatively few of the citizens fell into the ranks. This was the more to be remarked as it was in great contrast with what it had been at former times. The Emperor was greatly incensed at the opposition of the Reformers, and vowed to take vengeance in the Diet.

Again a demand was made to have the preaching stopped; and now, on consideration that the Emperor was master of the city, the princes gave way, but left themselves free to have it in their own palaces.

After various delays, and trying to condemn the Protestants unheard, the 25th of June was arranged to hear their Confession of Faith; the Catholics also were preparing one. Melanchthon had laboured hard to put it into soft words, and avoid giving needless offence. Over his work he feared and quaked, and was often in tears. He wrote to Luther asking him how much they could concede to the Catholics. "Concede to the Catholics? How much? We have already conceded too much," said Luther. He did all he could to cheer and encourage Melanchthon. On the 25th of June all hastened to the Emperor's palace. It would hold but about two hundred, and it was soon crowded. Bayer began to read the Confession. They were ready, it said, to confer with the Emperor, to seek to restore "the sole true faith," because it was for "the sole and same Christ" they fought.

It then spoke of the Trinity, and the various topics usual in such confessions.

It continued, "We teach, moreover, that we cannot be justified before God by our own strength, our merits, and our works; but that we are justified by Christ, through grace, through the means of faith."

"We teach, at the same time, that this faith ought to bear good fruits, and that we must do all the good works commanded by God, for the love of God, and not by their means to gain the grace of God."

They acknowledged the christian church to be "the assembly of all true believers and all the saints."

It afterwards proceeded to deal with the abuses which were admitted to exist in the church, and to state what they believed were the remedies. The Emperor had insisted that the preaching was to cease; but by this Confession not only were all the princes, but the Emperor himself sitting for two hours listening to the story of how man was to be saved, as well as to a detail of the abuses which many were so anxious to have covered up.

Many who could not gain admittance to the hall filled the corridors and listened at all the doors and openings. The full clear voice of Bayer enabled them all to hear. The papal legate had advisedly stayed away, so as not in any way to be compromised. The reading of this Confession was an important event. If the Catholic princes were called upon to join the Emperor in prosecuting the Reformers, they could not now make it an excuse that they did not know what the Protestants held, nor be led astray, except wilfully, through the very erroneous statements of the Catholics. They had heard with their own ears what it was these Reformers were contending for, as well as what they contended against. That the Confession was not perfect is not to be wondered at. Melancthon was very studious not to give offence. But considering the times in which it took place, and the general darkness around, it was a wonderful thing for many to have sat and heard an amount of truth which they had certainly never heard before. The reading of the Confession bore some good fruit. The Duke of Bavaria said to Eck, "You had given me a very different idea of this doctrine and of this affair. . . . Can you refute by sound reasons the confession made by the Elector and his allies?"

"With the writings of the apostles and prophets," said Eck, "No; but with those of the Fathers and of the Councils, Yes."

"I understand," said the Duke, "I understand. The Lutherans, according to you, are in scripture, and we are outside."

Several of the princes were gained over and the Confession did good in other places; for the Emperor sent copies to all the courts of Europe. It was translated into French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese.

Luther wrote to the princes, begging them now they had presented their Confession to leave the Diet and go home. At present they waited to see what would follow. The Emperor would have yielded something for peace' sake; but the papal legate was soon at his elbow to prevent him making any concession.

"If you have money," confessed one of the Secretaries of State to Melancthon, "it will be easy for you to buy from the Italians (the Papists) whatever religion you please; but if your purse is empty

your cause is lost." The Emperor Charles summoned the friends of the pope, and proposed the question: What reply could they make to the Confession?

Some advised that their best doctors should draw up a reply. Others advised that the Confession should be criticised and examined and then the subject be submitted to the Emperor for final decision. Others again advised that nothing should be done, but a demand made to carry out the edict of Worms.

Count Felix of Werdenburg offered to draw his sword, and to take an oath not to return it to its sheath till the overthrow of the stronghold of Luther. Another said the Confession had been written in black ink; if he were the Emperor he would answer in red — that is blood. Others advised a more moderate process. It was not simply Luther or Melanchthon, or a few monks; it was a question of princes and states they had to deal with. The majority ordered that a reply should be drawn up to the Confession. Men were at once chosen to do it. Eck and Faber, a friend of Erasmus, were the leaders. In the meantime the Emperor raised the question whether the Diet, and the Emperor as its mouthpiece, were competent to decide in a matter purely religious. He consulted both sides.

"Yes," said Luther; "but he must decide nothing contrary to the word of God." This was really saying, No; let the word of God decide by the mouth of the Emperor. The Catholics also said, "Yes; as guardian and protector of the church he could decide."

They waited for the reply of the friends of the pope. Luther said he could tell beforehand what it would be: "The Fathers, the Fathers, the Fathers; the church, the church, the church; usage, custom: but of the scriptures — nothing."

Melanchthon was filled with fear at the threats of war that reached him. The Emperor sent again and again for the Elector and Philip, which only increased Melanchthon's fear. He advocated reducing their claims to two points: the Lord's supper in the "two kinds," and the marriage of priests.

We may well ask what right had Melanchthon or any man to pare down the truth of God in this way? If their Confession was true, and they were told to "buy the truth and sell it not" (Prov. xxiii. 23), why not contend for it all? If not truth, why put it forward? But fear filled his soul, and he was desirous of a compromise. Luther was away out of hearing.

Melanchthon was told that if he thought he could bring about peace he had better try what he could do with the legate. Melanchthon wrote asking for an interview in a letter which could only proceed from one overwhelmed with fear — so contrary is it to the spirit of the Confession.* "We venerate," said Melanchthon, "the universal authority of the Roman Pontiff With the aid of God, we will remain faithful, even unto death, to Christ and to the Roman Church." Alas, poor Melanchthon! Where had he fallen to?

{* This letter is so contrary to the Confession also written by Melanchthon, that some doubt its authenticity but "the fear of man bringeth a snare."} But Luther heard of the talk of "concession," and he wrote at once to Melanchthon, "There can be no concord between Christ and Belial.* As far as regards me, I will not yield a hair's breadth."

{* This is doubtless an allusion to the passage in 2 Corinthians vi. 15: "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" Belial is most probably wickedness personified; the wicked one, that is, Satan.}

Melanchthon visited the legate. He had heard that he would yield to them the above two points, and he went full of hope. Melanchthon did not see that if these were granted, and peace was thus restored, they would be placing themselves again under the yoke of Rome, who would soon enforce obedience. It was in effect trying to build up the things they had once destroyed (Gal. ii. 18), and Melanchthon was thus far making himself thereby a transgressor. But God ordered it otherwise. Though Melanchthon had pared down the faith contended for to the two points, the legate would not consent to these. The Reformation was saved. Melanchthon retired, filled now with shame at the concessions he had made. In the meantime the Confession had been sent by express to Rome, and the pope's answer had arrived. He would yield nothing, neither would he sanction either discussion or a council. He exhorted the Emperor to send at once an army into Germany and crush the Reformation. The Emperor saw more clearly than the pope the extent of the Reformation and he hesitated. But Eck was now ready with his reply to the Protestant Confession. He sent it to the Emperor to look over privately. The Emperor was confounded. It filled two hundred and eighty pages, and it was so full of abuse and so far from the point that he, as a Catholic, was ashamed to have it read in the Diet. He sent it back, crumpled and torn, requesting them to make it shorter and more moderate. This occasioned a delay of nearly three weeks, and Charles doubted if it would be a success after all. So they adopted the plan of privately attacking the Protestant princes separately in the hope of gaining them over. But it was without success. The Elector was now threatened to have his states taken altogether from him if he did not yield. He fully saw his danger and for a time was filled with fear. But his faith revived. "It is God who made me Elector," said he, "me who was unworthy of it. I fling myself into His arms and let Him do with me what shall seem good to Him." The theologians rallied round their sovereign and told him that they did not wish him to risk the loss of his states and his crown for them. The Elector was moved by this; but declared, "I also desire to confess my Saviour." On the third of August the modified reply of Eck and his helpers was ready. It agreed with many things in the Confession as to the Trinity, eternal punishment, etc., but on other points it would yield nothing. It asserted that man was not utterly lost: good works were meritorious. It contended for the Lord's supper being a sacrifice, and was to be in "one kind" only; the priests must not marry; and they denied that the church "was an assembly of the saints." As Luther had said, these things were based on the Fathers and the church, and not on scripture. But it was held that the Protestants had been confuted and a demand was made that they should submit. Never were extreme measures so apparent. The Emperor would hear of no compromise; the Protestants must yield, or there would certainly be war. The Catholics negotiated with Italy for a regiment of light horse, and Henry VIII. of England promised to supply large sums of money. To make all sure, and prevent any of the princes escaping from Augsburg, orders were secretly given, and on the night of August 6, there was a great commotion in the city, the imperial soldiers were hastening in all directions, which ended by guards taking possession of the gates of the city in the name of the Emperor. The Protestant princes were again summoned before the Emperor and threatened. The Elector was told that his life would be taken and his states torn from him unless he agreed to their terms. The princes begged for time to reply. The Emperor had possession of all the gates of the city: prisoners as they were, what could they do? It seemed now they must be faithful to Christ, or face death. But they were surprised that Philip of Hesse was not with them that morning. He was perhaps

ill-at-ease and so stayed away. But news was soon brought to them that Philip had left the city, which on inquiry proved to be true. A little before the Emperor's soldiers had taken possession of the gates, Philip had made his way to one of them, disguised in a foreign dress. In a careless manner he rode past the guard without being recognized. Five or six of his attendants followed in the same careless manner at short intervals. Once fairly away from the city they put spurs to their horses and were soon far away. He had asked permission of the Emperor to leave but had been refused. He determined to wait no longer, and had thus slipped away, without bidding even his friends good-bye. When the Emperor put his soldiers at the gates, he made sure he had all the Protestant princes safe. But Philip of Hesse had escaped. As soon as his flight was known in the city all was in the greatest commotion. Had an earthquake taken place there could not have been greater consternation. Those whose states were near to Philip's began to fear that with his known courage and promptitude he would soon have his army ready and be attacking them, before they could leave the city. All saw that it was a stratagem of war, in which they had been defeated, and those who had been the loudest to cry out for war, were now as anxious to avoid it. The Emperor summoned the Diet at once — Sunday afternoon. He told them that Philip of Hesse had left the city. He hoped it had been unknown to the Reformers. The princes assured the Diet that it had been done without their knowledge; though they doubted not he had good reasons for going. They then reported that it had reached their ears that the Emperor's soldiers guarded the gates on account of them. They begged the guard might be withdrawn. The Emperor made a lame excuse about two soldiers having quarrelled and a mob being raised, but orders were immediately given to throw open the gates. The lions were at once turned into lambs, and the fiercest of the friends of the pope were meek and hoped all might be settled. A few Catholics and a few Protestants were now chosen to meet together in a more amiable way to see if they could not come to terms. This was exceedingly dangerous for the cause of truth. It sounded but reasonable that if Rome gave way on some points, the Reformers should also do the same, and thus meet about half way. The Protestant confession was taken up and gone through clause by clause, and what we should call shameful concessions were made by the Protestants. For instance, they agreed to acknowledge the pope as "supreme bishop of Christendom." At the same time they held him to be Antichrist, but they said they might be under him as the Jews were under Pharaoh! When it became known what those few met in consultation were agreeing to, there was a bitter cry from their fellow Christians. "Better die with Jesus Christ," said they, "than gain the favour of the whole world without Him." On the day Luther heard of what was going on he wrote five letters, stirring them up to courage and faithfulness. He again declared it was an attempt to reconcile Christ with Belial; and he plainly told them that he would not be bound by anything they might agree to. But the consultations really ended in nothing. The Catholics could only pretend to give up anything. The pope had declared he would not concede the two points, and without him they could not move. Melancthon, in the hope of peace, was led to concede much, but immediately afterwards was ashamed of it. But God was above it all. He forbade and prevented any real union; and they separated as far off from each other as ever.

Philip of Hesse was informed of what was going on and he too was indignant at the concessions of Melancthon. "If we are Christians," wrote he, "what we should pursue is, not our own advantage but the consolation of so many weary and afflicted consciences, for whom there is no salvation if we take away the word of God. . . . This is not the moment to yield, but to remain firm unto death. Baffle these fearful combinations of Melancthon, and tell, from me, the deputies of the cities to be

men, not women. Let us fear nothing: God is with us." The Protestant princes were now desirous of quitting Augsburg; but the Emperor detained them to close up the Diet. The recess* was drawn up. It was insulting to the Reformers: it called them a sect and said "the Confession had been soundly refuted by the holy scriptures." They were to have till April of the following year (it was now September) to come to some arrangement with the pope, and this was only granted on condition that they should join the Emperor in a war against the Anabaptists and all those who denied "the real presence" in the Lord's supper. By this they hoped to divide the Protestants into two bodies and employ one against the other.

{* The "recess" (from the French recez) is a formal statement of the decrees of the Diet.} The Protestant princes could agree to nothing so wicked. "We do not accept it," said they. Then the Emperor will seek counsel of the pope how best to root out "this sect and its new errors." The Diet is over — the princes leave; thankful that they had been able to remain firm before such fearful intimidations. In God was their strength. The anger of Charles was great when he saw the princes leave, unhumbled, to pursue their former course. He wrote to the pope, "The negotiations are broken off; our adversaries are more obstinate than ever; and I am resolved to employ my strength and my person in combating them." As we have seen, Charles had endeavoured to set one part of Protestantism against another; but the reverse of this took place. "We are one in the fundamental articles of faith," said the Swiss, "and in particular (notwithstanding some disputes about words among our theologians) we are one in the doctrine of the communion in the body and blood of our Lord. Receive us." The Saxon deputies opened their arms, and the Swiss and German Protestants were united.

Thus ended this Diet with its tedious delays — its consultations, its concession and its victories. The Catholics left, resolved to gather together their armies to enforce obedience to Rome; the Protestants, strengthened in their faith and with a determination to bow only to the word of God.

Luther had been all this while at Coburg. He was near enough to be consulted on all important points, and he was constantly looking out for letters from Augsburg, anxious to know how things were progressing; and was constantly writing to encourage and stir up the zeal of those who stood in the forefront. He longed greatly to be at Melancthon's elbow to stay his hand at concession and to stir up his faith. On the whole he rejoiced as to the Diet of Augsburg. They had really given up nothing, lost nothing; whereas, on the other hand, their Confession had been read by thousands, the truth had thus been spread, and some were gained over to the gospel. Their enemies had seen it was not merely a question of opinions or private judgment which could be held to-day and given up to-morrow. The Protestants had declared that God had taught them the truth on which they must live, and on which, if needful, they would die. It also brought the scripture into prominence. It was no longer the Fathers, nor the Schoolmen, nor the varying decrees of councils, nor the contradictory decision of the popes; it was the living, the unalterable, the invincible word of the living God.

27 Chapter 27. Attempts at Agreement — A.D. 1530-1536.

Chapter 27.

Attempts at Agreement — A.D. 1530-1536. At the end of 1530 the Elector was summoned to Cologne to meet with others to elect a king of the Romans. Ferdinand, the Emperor's brother, was to be the king. The Protestant princes held a meeting, and thought it right to oppose the election. The Elector wrote to Luther for his judgment. "I am a child in the things of the world," said Luther; "I will pray, and entreat therefore that God may be graciously pleased to guide and direct you, as He has hitherto done." He thought the Elector ought not to oppose the election. Melancthon gave the same advice. The Protestant princes however protested against the election, in which they were joined by some of the Catholic princes. The Emperor explained that he had too much to look after: the attention which so many lands claimed defied the attempts of a single sovereign to discharge the duty, though it has been judged that his real motive was to secure to his own family the succession to the office of Emperor. The king of the Romans was not to be a king of Italy, as his title might seem to imply, but a sort of deputy Emperor; so that he would, as well as the Emperor, be over the princes of Germany. The Protestant princes had no desire for this. They declared that they could not own any one as over them except the Emperor himself. Nevertheless Ferdinand was elected king of the Romans without the sanction of the Elector and his friends. The Protestant princes again met at Smalcalde* early in 1531. They had not separated when a message came from the Emperor requesting assistance from their states against the Turks, whose progress was as rapid as it was successful. The princes declared they were ready to bear a portion of the burdens of the empire; but complained that great violence had been used towards them. "Afford us protection," said they, "against further proceedings of the fiscal chambers, and we will render the required assistance."

{* Called also Schmalkalden or Smalcalden. It is a town in Hesse-Cassel, in the province of Fulda, at the meeting of two streams, the Schmalkalde and the Stine. It is ten miles north of Meiningen.} The Archbishop of Mentz and Louis, prince Palatine, offered to act as mediators between the Emperor and the Protestant princes, which was accepted. Deputies from all these met together; but it was the old question over again of making concessions. The deputies from the princes would not enter into any such questions in the absence of the theologians.

About the same time the count of Nassau and the count of Nuenar visited the Elector of Saxony. They advocated a compromise, and expressed their suspicion that the Elector was inclined to unite with the Sacramentarians. But he declared in the strongest terms his rooted dislike to that body. And what, we may ask again, was there to call forth this great dislike of the Elector? Why those Christians denied the "real presence" of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's supper. Thus, though after the Diet of Augsburg, the Germans and Swiss had agreed to own their oneness, yet there was really this animosity which should not have existed among Christians. The counts requested the Elector to be present at a proposed Diet to be held in September. But the Elector dreaded a repetition of the contests at Augsburg. The threats that had been thrown out

would make him require a safe-conduct before either he or his son could attend. Again, he could not agree to forbid the evangelists preaching the gospel; and he could not sin against his conscience by making a distinction between different kinds of meat. He also stated that if religion was to be a subject for consideration at the Diet, it would be necessary to have Luther and other theologians with him; for whom he should require safe-conducts.

Luther during all these questions was ever on the watch. He had lately published a book, "Martin Luther's Admonition to his beloved Germans," in which he shewed that if there were tumults and seditions, the Reformers were not responsible for them, for they advocated patience and submission even unto death.

"The most violent of our adversaries," said Luther, "are obliged to acknowledge that no article of the Protestant Confession opposes scripture or the rule of faith;" but certain ceremonies only and the decrees of the popes, who have imbrued their hands in the blood of many innocent confessors." Luther states three reasons against a religious war. One, was the close affinity there was between the gospel and the Protestant Confession: would they war against the gospel of God? The second, to carry on a war for Rome would be a re-establishing or strengthening all the worst abuses of the papal system; abuses which many of the Catholic princes were forward to condemn. Thirdly, to the purity of the doctrines put forth by the Protestants as compared with those put forth by the papists. Under this head he speaks of the doctrine of justification by faith, which he sees is really the object of all the persecution against them, but which the gates of hell will never be able to overcome. When the edict of Augsburg was published, Luther put forth another paper taking up the various points. He shewed how private masses, which brought so rich a harvest to the priests, were contrary to the gospel, which was not to be bought and sold. In answer to one who had attacked him he maintained that all Christians were bound to obey the powers that be; but that no one was obliged to obey the Emperor or any power if he commanded him to take up arms against true religion and justice; and he pointed to the example of St. Maurice who with ten thousand of his fellow-soldiers met death rather than obey the Emperor who desired them to do what they accounted unholy. The Diet which was to have been held in September was postponed till the following year (1532), when a Diet was held at Ratisbon.* Again the Archbishop of Mentz and the Elector Palatine persuaded the Emperor to let them again try to bring about a reconciliation. He gave his consent, and on April 1st a meeting was called at Schweinfurt, a town of Bavaria on the bank of the Main. The deputies came with a more formal proposition from the Emperor, the principal items of which were:{* A city of Bavaria, situated on the south bank of the Danube, opposite to the influx of the river Regen, from which its German name, Regensburg, is derived.}The Protestants should not publish or teach anything not contained in the Confession of Augsburg. That they should have no communication with the Zwinglians or Anabaptists. They should make no attempt, under the plea of religion, to draw to their party the subjects of other princes. That they should not allow their preachers to teach their doctrines beyond the boundaries of their own states. That they should neither disturb the established ecclesiastical jurisdiction, nor attack the rites and ceremonies of the church. That they should furnish succours against the Turks. That they should obey the Emperor and the king of the Romans.

If they did all this and more besides, the Emperor and the king of the Romans would forget all past offences. To these propositions the princes replied that the king of the Romans had been appointed contrary to all the rules of the Empire. To the other propositions they gave a general sort

of consent.

Charles was anxious to have assistance against the Turks, so that he took the advice of the mediating princes, and proclaimed that "no person should henceforth be interrupted in the observance of his religion till the meeting of a council, or at least till the orders of the empire had provided some method for the healing of the wounds inflicted by the present disorders." On the 27th of July the Diet of Ratisbon was broken up, and the princes hastened away to their states to summon their people to march against the Turks. As this was being done the aged John Elector of Saxony, departed this life. His son John Frederick succeeded him. A bloody conflict was expected with the Turks, Soliman with his victorious army was at Gratz, a place in Styria; the Emperor with his army was in the vicinity of Vienna. There each watched for the other to make the attack. At length Soliman withdrew the Turks without venturing a battle, and the danger was over. No sooner was Charles at liberty than he turned his face towards Rome, and consulted with the pope as to the proposed council. The pope by his nuncio wrote to the new Elector of Saxony, informing him that the pope agreed to a General Council, conformable to the councils held by the Fathers and under the direction of the Holy Ghost, providing that promises would be given that its decisions should be final. He would name the place of its meeting. It would be either Bologna, Placentia, or Mantua.

John Frederick was wise enough not to reply offhand. He told the messengers of the pope and of the Emperor that, as a numerous body of persons had taken part in the Confession at Augsburg it would not be seemly in him to answer without consulting them. A meeting was about to be held in June at Smalcalde, when the proposition should be considered, and a reply made to the pope. At the meeting the pope's letter was taken into solemn consideration. They had asked for a General Council, and now one was offered to them. Could they accept it? They drew up a reply.

They thanked the Emperor for his determination for a Council, but they must qualify their acceptance of it. They needed a council, in which neither the power nor the influence of the pope should interfere with the due consideration of their cause, and whereat no attempt should be made to decide the points in dispute by the decrees of the popes and the opinion of the schoolmen, but only by the authority of scripture. The council should be held in Germany, as the Emperor himself admitted; and not in either of the three places named, which were in the states of the pope. They could not bind themselves to accept the decisions of the council as final, until they knew more of its constitution and its basis of deciding questions. They had noticed that the pope had said this council was to be held in conformity to former councils. But what did that mean? Some of the councils merely enforced what had been decided on by the pope. Judging that the pope really meant to entrap them, they said, "If the pope insists on pursuing his present purpose, we place our cause in the hands of God, who will defend His doctrine and the purity of His worship."

Thus spoke these princes to the Emperor, and through him to the pope, in behalf of the Protestants generally. The pope had named eighteen months as a probable period before the council could be called. But what might not take place during so long a period?

Luther however was busy with writing, preaching and lecturing, when a turn was given to affairs by the death of the pope Clement VII. in 1534. Cardinal Farnese, under the title of Paul III. was his successor.

He sent his minister Paul Verger into Germany to sound the Elector and his friends as to the council. The pope was desirous of the council, but it must be held in Italy, and be governed "by the rules of former councils." The Elector, said he, would consult with his friends before giving a reply.

Verger went to Wittenberg, and Luther was invited to have an interview with him. Luther was so thoroughly convinced that nothing good could be got from the pope that he was inclined to ridicule both the pope and his minister.

Pomeranus accompanied Luther. They were all civil and courteous to one another. The subject of the council was soon introduced. "I and my associates," said Luther, "are convinced by the Holy Spirit of the truth of our doctrine, and need no council to determine for us; but there are others who, ignorant and sorrowful and oppressed by tyranny, know not what they ought, or what they ought not, to believe. Let a council then be called: I will be present, though it should condemn me to be burnt." The legate asked whether priests were ordained now in Saxony. "They are ordained," said Luther, "for the pope would not ordain them for us. And behold here sits a bishop (pointing to Pomeranus) whom we have ordained." Had Luther been asked for his authority, it would have been awkward: for certainly he could not have shewn his authority from scripture to ordain others.

They had further conversation, and Luther assured the legate that their opinion did not rest on the learning or wisdom of men; but on the firm and solid rock, the word of God, which should remain for ever, and yield not to the gates of hell. The words and courage of Luther had a good effect on the legate. He found the Reformer and his work different from what they had been represented to him. He eventually became a minister in the reformed church. The Protestant princes had called a meeting to consider and to reply to the message of the pope brought to them by Verger. It was firm but respectful. The council could not be held in Italy, unless the safety of those attending it were guaranteed. As former popes had punished the adherents to the reformed doctrine when they could, Paul III. ought not to be the judge. The pope himself rather needed to be judged. They desired an impartial tribunal, and one that would decide according to scripture. But before this meeting broke up, an envoy arrived from the King of France. He was meditating a war against Italy, and was in hopes of gaining the assistance of the Protestant princes. What heartlessness and want of common honesty, for this man to make such a proposition to the Protestants — with his hands all bloody with persecuting their friends in France! He made the best excuse he could for the persecution he had been carrying on, and gave great assurance of his friendly feeling now. This same man afterwards shocked the whole of Christianity by forming an alliance with the Turks. The princes could place no faith in the king's repentance, and could form no alliance which might be construed into treason against the Emperor. At the above meeting of the Protestant princes another ambassador also arrived. It was Fox, bishop of Hereford, and he came from Henry VIII. of England. The history of the Reformation in England must be sought, for the causes which had transformed so bitter an enemy to the Reformation, as Henry VIII. was, into a friend and admirer.* Fox told the princes that Henry was well disposed, not only to the Elector of Saxony, but also to the reformers and the Reformation. He exhorted them against any jealousy or schism among themselves to weaken their strength in the approaching council. If peace was restored it must be on the basis of scripture. He informed them of how the papal power had been destroyed in England, and exhorted them not to take part in any council which would only confirm the power of the pope and re-establish superstition.

{* See a companion volume: "Lights and Shadows of the Reformation."}

However Luther might at times seem to desire to confine the Reformation to spiritual matters, it associated itself more and more with politics. We have seen that he himself advocated the freedom of the nation from the pope's control, and now that the Protestant princes had formed an alliance and met together at Smalcalde — altogether irrespective of whether they were Christians or not — they were appealed to as a powerful political body both by France and England; and indeed it is credibly stated that the princes themselves had previously sent their ambassadors to both the above courts. At the end of the meeting these Protestant princes were joined also by the Duke of Wurtemberg and the princes of Pomerania, together with the cities of Frankfort, Augsburg, Hamburg and Hanover.

It was at the meeting at Smalcalde that were drawn up another set of Articles of Faith, known as the "Articles of Smalcalde." They are said to have been written by Luther, and were similar to the Augsburg Confession, but bolder in language. Melancthon qualified his subscription to them. He thought the pope might be acknowledged, provided he allowed the word of God to be preached in purity. But what pope ever did this?

Erasmus, a learned Dutchman, died soon after this (in the year 1536). He had long seen the follies and errors of the priests, and had very freely censured them, mostly in a sarcastic style, but had always managed to escape punishment, though he offended many, indeed he was caressed by kings and popes. It was said that "Erasmus laid the egg, and Luther hatched it;" but Erasmus had never gone beyond pointing out errors and follies; he had not faith to follow the light or to suffer for Christ, though he valued the scriptures and published a New Testament in Greek and Latin (in 1516). He was solicited to attack Luther, but declined. Of him he said, "Luther has given us a wholesome doctrine, and many a good counsel. I wish he had not defeated the effect of them by intolerable faults. But if he had written everything in the most unexceptionable manner, I had no inclination to die for the sake of truth. Every man has not the courage requisite to make a martyr; and I am afraid, that if I were put to the trial I should imitate St. Peter."

28 Chapter 28. Insurrection of the Anabaptists — A.D. 1534, 1535.

Chapter 28.

Insurrection of the Anabaptists — A.D. 1534, 1535. The city of Munster* was now the scene of a seditious and bloody insurrection by the Anabaptists. Bernard Rotman and John of Leyden** were the leaders. Rotman had begun to work in Munster as an evangelist; if he was then an anabaptist he was one secretly. But he was so successful in arousing the people that numbers rallied round him, and even the magistrates professed to believe in what he preached. The senate passed a sentence that the churches were to be for these preachers. The Catholics were alarmed and retired to a village near by, and appealed to the bishop for help. This help was sent, and they prepared to attack the town. They deemed it best to send a messenger first with a demand to the senate that the churches should be restored.

{* Munster is the capital of a province of the same name, and is situated on both sides of the small river Aa in Westphalia, Prussia; it was surrounded by a double mound and a moat until 1765.

{** His name was John Boccold, or Beukels, and he was a journeyman tailor of Leyden: but he was better known as John of Leyden. The senate detained the messenger and in the night a body from the town of nearly a thousand surrounded the village and compelled the Catholics to come to terms; which were that six churches should be given up to the preachers, and many of the ancient rites were to be abolished as superstitions. We feel sure Luther would never have sanctioned such a step; his doctrine was that we must not take the law into our own hands.

Peace thus restored did not last long; the city was visited by John of Leyden, the well-known anabaptist. The senate proceeded to banish him from the city, but Bernard Rotman now avowed himself a believer in these doctrines, and again all was in confusion. The true Reformers however opposed him too, and it was hoped peace would be restored; but those who were banished had not left the town but lay hidden among their friends. The Landgrave of Hesse sent two eminent preachers, in the hope that truth would prevail over fanaticism. These challenged the anabaptists to prove their doctrines by scripture, but they much preferred talking of visions and revelations apart from scripture — a true proof of their not being of God. The anabaptists worked secretly till many were won to their side, when they made an open attack upon the others. They also sent to the villages around begging all to flock to Munster, and by this means they became almost entire masters of the town. Certain men, said to be prophets, were under their guidance — they appointed a senate of their own, with a new form of government. The first order they made was that those who had money and property were to bring it to one place, there to be disposed of according to the decision of the prophets. John of Leyden pretended to fall into a trance and to have a revelation. In this revelation he declared he had orders to alter the law of marriage and now every Christian might have as many wives as he pleased. John immediately married three wives, and others followed his example. This was opposed by many; but the fanatics carried everything before them. Being masters of the city, they put to death those who sought to oppose them. A new prophet arose, who had also had a revelation, in which John of Leyden was to be "King of all the

earth," and he should go forth with an army to destroy all who refused to receive the new gospel.

John of Leyden said that he also had had a similar revelation, but that he had hesitated to speak of it lest he should be thought to claim such a dignity by his own testimony only. The people were filled with wonder at the tidings of such a double revelation.

John was no sooner proclaimed king than he put down the other rulers of the city, and sat on a throne in an open part of the city, dressed in splendid robes, and wearing a crown of gold, surrounded by his officers ready to judge any cases needing to be judged. A Bible was carried on one side of him and a naked sword on the other. He had money coined with his own image, and in all ways carried himself as king. The bishop of Munster collected an army and besieged the town; but such was the strength of its fortifications that they could not take it. The surrounding states took up the matter and made an order for 3,000 infantry, and 300 horse. These were slow in being sent; but those who were mustered surrounded the town and it became threatened by famine; yet nothing could damp the ardour of the anabaptists.

One day John made a solemn assembly by sound of trumpet. About four thousand attended near the cathedral, for whom a meal had been provided. At the close of this, John passed through the ranks giving bread to the people, saying, "Take eat, and declare the death of the Lord." He was followed by the Queen who carried the wine. Thus did these wicked people profanely pretend to take the Lord's supper. After this John made them promise obedience. Then he declared that he had had an order from God that twenty-eight evangelists should go forth to preach the doctrines held at Munster.

Strange to say twenty-eight men were found willing to leave the city to fulfil this mission, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, they being doubtless themselves deceived. Where they went they were at once seized as rebels, and put to death. Only one of their number escaped. The princes who had sent the army desired to save the city, and the officer addressed an appeal to them to surrender. Many would gladly have done so, but John watched everything narrowly and prevented its being carried out. He declared that Easter was approaching, and then their trials would be ended, and their efforts be crowned by victory. In the meantime the famine sorely increased, attended by disease and sickness. One historian relates that they hunted for, and devoured, all the rats they could catch, and then they turned cannibals and ate those who died from famine, and even killed some of the children and ate them. Every day added to the deaths, though John himself still lived in plenty. One of his wives sympathized with the starving people, and ventured to question if he was right in living in plenty while others were starving. She was summoned into his presence, along with his other wives. They were warned not to be guilty of a similar indiscretion, and to strike terror into all, he had her kneel before him and with his own hand he struck off the head of the blasphemer, as he called her. Singing and dancing followed the execution! Thus these fanatics became a disgrace to our common humanity.

It was not till April, 1535 — when the city had been in the hands of the rebels over twelve months that any real efforts were made to take the city. A regular army was now placed under a general, who planned to take the place by assault. The city was again summoned to surrender; the people were eager for it, but John prevented them.

It was not till June 24 that an assault was attempted. Two of the inhabitants had escaped, who willingly told the soldiers the weakest part of the fortifications. In the night a few brave fellows gained a certain pass and climbed a rampart. The sentinels were killed, and a door being unguarded they entered the city. They were fiercely attacked, but managed to keep the foe at bay while they opened one of the gates and admitted the body of soldiers. A general onslaught followed. The people rallied round their king, but he was taken prisoner alive. Rotman threw himself into the midst of the conflict and fell covered with wounds. The fanatics did not long continue the conflict. Munster was taken.

Thus ended the reign of John of Leyden. He was taken before the judges, and after being carried from city to city in chains was brought back to Munster and condemned to a cruel death, his flesh being torn away with hot pincers. Two other leaders shared the same fate. His conduct had been cruel and atrocious, and he deserved death; but was such a manner of putting him to death worthy of a country calling itself christian?

Luther was, deeply grieved at the proceedings of the anabaptists. Their doctrine was certainly not his doctrine, though the Catholics insisted that this was but the fruit of that liberty of conscience for which Luther pleaded. None were louder than Luther in condemning the anabaptists, both in their doctrine and in their seditious practices. It is instructive to see how Satan damages the work he cannot stop, by attaching to that which is real his own followers in mere profession. If old prejudices are broken through by the gospel, he takes advantage of the desire for reform to break through all that men have held to be sacred, to accomplish his own ends of spoliation and death.

29 Chapter 29. Darkness Amid the Light — A.D. 1540.

Chapter 29.

Darkness Amid the Light — A.D. 1540. In 1540 a great scandal was brought upon the Reformation, and a great dishonour upon the Lord Jesus, whom the Reformers professed to follow at all cost. Philip of Hesse — who had been one of the principal champions for the Reformation among the princes, and who boldly blamed Melanchthon for the concessions he was desirous of making at Augsburg — now desired to take a second wife while his first was still alive, and living with him. This caused a serious difficulty. Such an act was condemned in every christian country, and by the Catholic religion. Would the Reformers sanction such an acknowledged wickedness? We have seen that at Munster, John of Leyden had pretended to have a revelation from heaven to alter the law of marriage, and any that wished it could have several wives? This was universally condemned: how then could the Reformers now sanction such a thing in one who was believed to be one of themselves? Scripture made no difference between a prince and a poor man; but should not the prince, having espoused the cause of the gospel and the truth, have been a pattern to others in all purity and godliness?

Philip referred the matter to the Reformers, and in doing so tried to find sanction for his desire in scripture. "I have read," wrote he, "in the Old Testament that holy persons, such as Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, had many wives, and yet all believed in the coming of Christ. Neither has God in the Old Testament nor Christ in the New, nor the prophets or apostles, forbidden a man to have two wives. . . . When St. Paul tells us so expressly that a bishop should be the husband of one wife, he would have laid the same injunction on the laity, had he wished that a layman should have one only also. . . . But let them not suppose that, because I should have another wife, I shall treat the first one ill, cease to live with her, or shew her less friendship than before . . . let them then, in God's name, grant me what I demand, so that I may live and die cheerfully for the honour of the gospel, and as a good Christian. All which they ask that is just and reasonable I shall grant to them, even the property of the monasteries or similar things. . . . Further I only wish and ask for two wives. What matters it what the world says? We need not pay attention to it: we must look to God in all this, what He prescribes, prohibits or permits."

Luther referred the Landgrave to the divines at Hesse. But Philip was not content with this; he must have the judgment of the chief Reformers, Luther, Melanchthon, etc. This was a trying time for Luther. He had been bold against the priests and the pope and the Emperor, or rather — as he himself put it — against the work of Satan in these people. He had also been bold against the anabaptists, who, by the bye, had referred to the same passage in the New Testament (1 Tim. iii. 2) as Philip had: they for their many wives; he for his two. Would Luther be now as bold against one of his friends as he had been against the anabaptists? Let us see. The Reformers met and drew up twenty-four articles; we can only give the conclusion.

"Your highness yourself sufficiently comprehends the difficulty there is in setting up a universal rule, or to give reasons for a dispensation for a particular case. We cannot publicly introduce and

sanction as by a law the permission to espouse several wives. . . . We pray your highness to consider in what peril a man would be — convicted of having introduced into Germany such a law, which would divide families and engage them in endless lawsuits. That it please your highness to examine seriously the consideration of the scandal, labours, anxieties, sorrows and infirmities which have been presented to him.

"If your highness is determined to marry a second wife, we judge that it ought to be done privately, as we have said on speaking of the dispensation on which you ask; that is to say that there should be no person present but the celebrant and a few others as witnesses, who shall be bound to secrecy, as if under the seal of confession. Hence there will be fear neither of opposition nor of great scandal; for it is nothing uncommon for princes to keep concubines. . . . Thus we approve of it.

"Your highness has therefore in this writing not only our approbation of your wish in all the exigencies that may occur, but also the reflection which we have made of it." This was signed by Luther, Melancthon, Bucer, Corvin, Adam, Lening, Wintfert and Melander. These are the principal Reformers of Wittenberg and Hesse.

How was it that Luther and his co-workers overlooked our Lord's instruction on the subject? He expressly stated that Moses had allowed a looseness as to marriage because of the hard-heartedness of the Jews, but telling them that it must not be so among them, and that it was not so ordered of God at the beginning. (Matt. xix. 3-9.) God only created one wife for Adam, and speaks only of one in Genesis ii. 24. And in the New Testament a woman may marry a second husband only if the first be dead. (1 Cor. vii. 39.) Again and again two are spoken of as being one — the man and the wife — but never three. Indeed the thing is so plain, that though in Christianity they have differed on nearly every other subject, they have all and always agreed on this. With this before us, and judging by the paper itself drawn up by the Reformers on the subject, with all its excuses and desire for secrecy, it is clear that they had not the boldness to declare the truth. It was a very serious fall of those who signed that paper, and forms a great blot on the character of Luther.

Philip of Hesse married his second wife, and used to go to church with both his wives, and unblushingly took his place between them, to the great scandal of every godly Christian when it became known.

Thus is man in his best estate but a poor failing creature! Not that there is any excuse for the Reformers: they were greatly to blame, but it exalts the grace of God in saving such as they, and (may we not say?) such as we.

30 Chapter 30. The General Council — A.D. 1540-1545.

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Every year had the subject of a general council been mooted and discussed. The pope seemed now to be anxious to have the council, but the Reformers saw plainly that he wanted to have it held in Italy, in order that he might make it do just what he pleased, so that in no sense would it be free to consider the questions pressing. The Reformers, too, insisted that scripture should be the standard of appeal: Rome could admit of no such thing.

Henry VIII. of England declared that as there was no hope of a free General Council, every prince should take upon himself the duty of reforming the church of his own country. "My kingdom is not of this world," said our Lord; and what had worldly princes to do with reforming the church? Christendom generally had long before grown into a great outward system half political, and half religious, so that it was difficult to distinguish the church from the world. The Reformation seemed to be a coming out from this, but it soon began to drift into a similar false position. In October 1540 a conference was held at Worms, at which a legate from the pope was present, desirous of coming to terms of peace. Melancthon and Eck began to discuss the points in dispute, and began on what is called "original sin," But they had scarcely made a good start, when the Emperor recalled his ministers, and the conference broke up. In April 1541 a Diet was held at Ratisbon. Various conferences were held over the disputed points, and the Emperor put into the hands of those chosen to consult together, a book, supposed to have been written by a canon of Cologne named Gropper, and which it was hoped was so cleverly written that all could subscribe to it. It dealt with twenty-two of the chief points in dispute, and by often employing the very words of scripture and by dexterously explaining some things and softening others, the writer hoped he had hit upon the happy medium. But the Catholics declared the effort to be too favourable to the reform principles: they pronounced it to be heresy, and all the more dangerous because it was so cleverly disguised. On the other hand Luther, the Elector, and the more strenuous Reformers denounced the work as an impious compound of truth and error. Thus they were as far apart as ever. Truth could not be made to blend with error: God had forbidden the union.

Similar Diets were held from time to time; but they all ended really as they began. A free general council was asked for by the Protestants: it was promised by the Emperor, but it was the pope's aim to see that it either did not take place, or that, if it did, it should not be free. In the meantime George of Saxony died. He had been one of the most strenuous supporters of the papacy, and an avowed enemy of Luther, since they first met. In his will he left his estates to his brother Henry and his two sons on condition that they remained faithful to the Catholic faith. As the end of George approached, deputies went to Henry, saying, Come and possess the treasures of your brother. "Your language," said Henry, "reminds me of the promise which the devil made to Jesus Christ, if He would fall down and worship him. No! you solicit me in vain. I cannot resign the possession of truth and religion for that of any temporal advantage." Henry had embraced the truth, and he could not accept the inheritance as a Catholic.

Still Henry believed himself entitled to the estates by natural right; therefore as soon as George died he took possession of Dresden and other towns in the dominions. Many in George's states had embraced the gospel, but had been prevented making any open profession on account of the rigour of their sovereign; but now he was dead they hailed with joy the Protestant Henry.

Luther hastened to Leipsic, to help on the work. The believers there had had but little instruction. He would devote his time and his energies to build up and instruct the faithful of that city. In December 1545 the General Council so long looked for, and so long promised, opened its sittings — it was the famous Council of Trent. It soon became evident that the pope meant to carry everything his own way. He called his cardinals and appointed a certain number of them with others to watch carefully the movements of the council, and to act accordingly, and to see that nothing went wrong. He also desired that swift posts should be arranged between Trent and Rome that he might have the earliest information. The subject of reform was put off from time to time — discussing all sorts of subjects in preference to that: indeed, as was foreseen, the pope did just as he liked. The council was adjourned from time to time; but was professedly continued till December 1563, that is nineteen years; though at times there were present but a few Italian and Spanish prelates, and as a whole it became entirely a Roman Catholic council, and established what was to be and what was not to be the faith of that church. And to this council Roman Catholics now turn for a decision on any article of their faith.

Soon after the Council began to meet, Luther passed from the scene. We must take a glance at his declining years.

31 Chapter 31. Luther's Old Age and Death — A.D. 1534-1546.

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Luther's Old Age and Death — A.D. 1534-1546.

Infirmities had been increasing upon Luther, but he steadily went on with his work as long as his strength lasted. He finished translating the Old Testament: it had been published in parts, but was issued complete in 1534. This was a great work. In itself it was a revolution. Every Christian could now read for himself all God had caused to be written; take nothing second-hand; know what was truth and what was not. On the other hand, all Germany could now read for themselves God's way of salvation. They had been taught that there was no salvation out of the Romish church, and the Romish priests were the door-keepers of that church: now they could see for themselves that of any one it was written, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. x. 9.) The word of God said, "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." (1 John v. 12.) Union with the Son of God was life: not with the pope or anything of his. The word said, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John ii. 1); and "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 9.) Not a word about confessing to the priest, nor penances, nor needing the priest's absolution. They could go direct to God and get His forgiveness.

It also corrected abuses. Instead of the pope being God's vicar on earth, he was never even once named in the Bible. The Lord's supper was certainly taken in "both kinds" in the days of the apostles: who had restricted it to one kind? The bishop is there said to be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. iii. 2), and there is to be no forbidding to marry (1 Tim. iv. 3); who then had invented the celibacy of the priests? And so of many other things. The light — the light of God's word — had appeared amid the darkness, and the common people could now meet the priests with a "Thus saith the Lord" in opposition to their constant cry of "Thus saith the church, or the pope, or the councils, or the Fathers." As the word of God became the authority, so all other authorities sank into their own littleness and vanity. With the Old Testament as well as the New they could contrast the Jewish dispensation with that of Christ, and be able to see how in many things Rome clung to the former in preference to the latter. In God's hands Luther had been the means of this light shining upon Germany. If he had done nothing else, this in itself was a great work.

Now he was getting old and infirm. He had worn himself out in his master's cause; still he taught, he preached, he wrote, but was sometimes so weak that he had to be carried to his home. He also commenced a revision of his edition of the Bible. He called around him the pious and learned: one with his Hebrew Bible, another the Greek, another the Latin, and by careful comparison they sought to make the translation more correct, a nearer transcript of what God had caused to be written.

Another work that Luther accomplished was to write a catechism for children, called "The Little Catechism," besides his "Larger Catechism." In his visitations he observed how very faulty were the schoolmasters in their religious instruction. Of course they could not teach what they did not know: but Luther was anxious that the light should also shine into the hearts of the little ones, so he wrote for them "The Little Catechism," and he afterwards rejoiced that lads and young maidens knew more of God and of Christ than many of the priests had ever known.

Three times had plagues broken out at Wittenberg (1516, 1527, 1535) when most who were able fled from the town for safety. But Luther on each occasion remained at his post: he visited the sick and administered relief and comfort. In 1527 even the University was removed to Jena, but Luther remained. "Lord, I am in thy hand," said he, "Thou hast fixed me here; Thy will be done." The plague was carried in the clothes and two of Luther's children were taken ill. "I am like a dying man," said he, "and yet I live." His children recovered, and at the end of the year he exclaimed, "God hath shewn Himself wondrously merciful to us." In 1537 Luther was taken dangerously ill. He had travelled to Smalcalde, but had to take to his bed. Here the Elector John visited and comforted him. "The good God, our Lord," said the Elector, "will be merciful unto us and prolong your life." If taken home, the prince declared that Luther's wife and children should have his special care. He sent too in every direction for anything thought to be of any help for Luther's recovery. The Lord removed the disease, and Luther regained his health.

Luther felt for the people, and none were beneath his notice. There was a man named Hans Kohlhase, a sort of captain of banditti, and who attracted great attention. He had been respectable but had suffered a series of real or imagined injuries, without redress from the rulers, which so aroused his strong and vigorous mind that he became an outlaw and a robber, and joined with any who opposed the state. To this man Luther wrote and invited him to visit him secretly.

One day a knock came at Luther's door, and he thought at once that perhaps it was Kohlhase. He would answer the door himself. It was he. Luther conducted him quietly to his own room, and sent for Melanchthon and a few others. They heard the man's tale of his losses and injuries; and they promised to do what they could to have justice done to him. In the meantime he promised to abstain from all further violence. They sat with him till late at night, giving him good advice and in the morning he stole away unknown and unobserved. The exertions of Luther and his friends on his behalf were fruitless; and again he took to his robbery and violence. He was at length captured, and executed in 1540. Luther had done his best to reclaim and save the robber. On September 20, 1542, Luther was called to a new trial. The grim "enemy" Death entered his dwelling, and removed his daughter Magdalen. During her illness Luther had prayed earnestly for her recovery. He said at her bedside, "I love her much; but if it be thy will, O God, to take her I shall gladly know her to be with thee." As he saw her end approaching, he said to her, "Magdalen, my little daughter, thou wouldst gladly remain here with thy father; but thou wilt also readily go to thy other Father."

"Yes, dear father, as God wills," said the dying child. And she passed away.

Though Luther enjoyed much happiness in his family circle and among his friends, yet there was much within and without to loosen his hold of this earth. "The world is tired of me," said he, "and I am tired of it: we shall easily part, as a guest leaves his hotel not unwillingly." In 1546 Luther was invited to Eisleben to assist in settling a dispute between the Dukes of Mansfeld and some of their subjects respecting some mines and land. Luther was related to some of the disputants, which

was naturally a reason why he should not have gone; but the princes had confidence in him as a just and upright man, and he was chosen.

He set out with his three sons. His wife parted with him in sorrow: she had a sort of presentiment that she should never see him again alive. He wrote to comfort her, reminding her that God, was almighty. "Therefore rest in peace, my dearest Kate," said he.

Upon reaching Halle, he was so unwell that Dr. Jonas resolved to accompany him. In crossing Saale the water had so swollen that they were in great danger of all going to the bottom. However they crossed in safety. At the frontiers of Mansfeld he was met by the Dukes and a number of attendants. On the 17th of February his illness increased, yet he was enabled to walk about the room. At length he seemed struck with a thought: "I was born and baptized at Eisleben," said he; "what if I should remain and even die here!"

He supped and seemed cheerful. But after supper his illness increased, and he retired to bed. But about midnight he arose and walked about his room. He felt his end was approaching, and his friends were called around him. Then he prayed, saying: "O eternal and merciful God, my heavenly Father, I thank thee that thou hast revealed to me thy Son Jesus Christ, in whom I have believed, whom I have preached, whom I have confessed, whom I love and worship as my dear Saviour and Redeemer Though I must lay down this body, yet know I assuredly that I shall dwell with thee for ever, and that none can pluck me out of thy hands. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

He was silent. He was asked if he died in the belief of the doctrines of Christ as he had preached them. He gave an emphatic "Yes," and his spirit took its flight.

He was buried at Wittenberg. An inscription in Latin tells the visitor where the body lies.

He was only sixty-three years and a few months, but he had been worn out in his Master's service. "Often have I gone to him unawares," said Melanchthon, "and found him dissolved in tears and prayers for the church of Christ." As we have proceeded with Luther's history his natural character for boldness and intrepidity have often been seen. His tenacity to what he believed to be true was another mark of his character, but which unhappily was as great when he was wrong as when he was right. Erasmus said also of him, "God has sent in this latter age a violent physician, on account of the magnitude of the existing disorders." But above his faults — and who is faultless? — we bless God for the grace given to him. Humanly speaking, again and again one and another would have given way and compromised the truth, but for the staunch and unbending zeal and energy of Martin Luther.

Above all, he was God's servant, raised up to do a special work for Him. It may be said that he was to blame in his behaviour to the Swiss Christians, and in the matter of Philip of Hesse's two wives. True. Also that he failed to restore to the church its heavenly character. True. But he brought to light the great truth of justification by faith, maintaining this truth in spite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness and the enmity of Rome. This of itself undermined the fabric of Rome. Priestcraft, penances, absolutions, indulgences all fell into the shade as faith arose in the horizon.

Another great work Luther was called to do for God was to give to the Germans the word of God in their mother tongue. It is true increased light and further knowledge of the original tongues have pronounced his work of translation to be faulty; but we doubt not he did it faithfully according to the light he had, and for which thousands heartily thanked their God. The scripture, as we have seen, was God's light that shone into many a dark corner, and judged and made manifest the gross darkness all around.

If it was a question of forgiveness, it said, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.)

If it was a question of justification, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.) "Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii. 9.)

If it was a question of mediation, There is "one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. ii. 5.)

If it was a question of access to God, "We have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. . . . Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." (Heb. iv. 14, 16.) He "hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." (Rev. i. 6.)

If it was purgatory, "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the saints in light." (Col. i. 12.) He "hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 6.)

If it was the Mass, "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) There is "no more sacrifice for sins." (Ver. 26.)

If it was confession, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 9; ii. 1.) "Confess your faults one to another." (James v. 16.)

If it was the Lord's supper in "both kinds," or the marriage of the priests, the scripture which Luther had put into the hands of all was equally plain. Thus God raised up Luther to do a work for Him, and he did it. God took him home. We are not all Luthers; it may be none of us are. But, if Christians, we are God's workmanship. (Eph. ii. 10.) He has for each a work to do. When we have done it, He will take us home, or Christ will come to fetch us. (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.) May we be so walking and so working as to please Him, and be found to be overcomers, in His strength, amid the surrounding evil, and at length receive that white stone of His approval, on which is written a new name which no man knows but he that receives it. (Rev. ii. 17.)

"I need no other plea
With which to approach to God
Than His own mercy, boundless, free,
Through Christ on man bestowed;
A Father's love, a Father's care
Receives and answers every prayer.
I need no human ear
In which to pour my prayer,
My great High Priest is ever near,
On Him I cast my care;
To Him, Him only, I confess,
Who can alone absolve and bless.
I need no works by me,
Wrought with laborious care,
To form a meritorious plea,
Why I heaven's bliss should share:
Christ's finished work through boundless grace
Has there secured my dwelling place.
I need no prayers to saints,
Beads, relics, martyrs' shrines,
Hardships, 'neath which the spirit faints,
Yet still sore-burdened pines;
Christ's service yields my soul delight,
Easy His yoke, His burden light.
I need no other book
To guide my steps to heaven,
Than that on which I daily look,
By God's own Spirit

given;And this, when He illumines our eyes,'Unto salvation makes us wise.'I need no holy oilTo
anoint my lips in death,No priestly power, my guilt to assoil,And aid my parting breath;Long since
those words bade fears to cease'Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.'I need no priestly
Mass,No purgatorial fires,My soul to anneal, my guilt to effaceWhen this brief life expires;Christ
died my eternal life to win,His blood has cleansed me from all sin.I need no other dress,I urge no
other claim,Than His unspotted righteousnessIn Him complete I am;Heaven's portals at that word
fly wide,No passport do I need beside."

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