THE BULL OF ROME (1520)

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Chapter 1

Character of Maximilian

A new actor was about to appear on the stage. God designed to bring the Wittenberg monk face to face with the most powerful monarch that had appeared in Christendom since the days of Charlemagne. He selected a prince in the vigor of youth, and to whom every thing seemed to announce a long reign — a prince whose scepter extended over a considerable part of the old world, and even the new, so that (according to a celebrated saying) the sun never went down on his vast dominions; and to him He opposed that lowly Reformation, begun in the secluded cell of a convent at Erfurth by the anguish and the sighs of a poor monk. The history of this monarch and of his reign was destined, it would seem, to teach the world an important lesson. It was to show the nothingness of all the strength of man when it presumes to measure itself with the weakness of God. If a prince, a friend to Luther, had been called to the imperial throne, the success of the

Reformation might have been ascribed to his protection. If even an emperor opposed to the new doctrines, but yet a weak ruler, had worn the diadem, the triumph of this work might have been accounted for by the weakness of the monarch. But it was the haughty conqueror at Pavia who was destined to vail his pride before the power of God's Word; and the whole world beheld the man, who found it an easy task to drag Francis I a prisoner to Madrid, obliged to lower his sword before the son of a poor miner.

The emperor Maximilian was dead, and the electors had met at Frankfort to choose a successor. This was an important event for all Europe under the existing circumstances. All Christendom was occupied with this election. Maximilian had not been a great prince; but his memory was dear to the people. They were delighted to call to recollection his presence of mind and his good nature. Luther used often to converse with his friends about him, and one day related the following anecdote of this monarch: A mendicant was once following him and begging alms, calling him brother: "for (said

he) we are both descended from the same father, Adam. I am poor (continued he), but you are rich, and you ought therefore to help me." The emperor turned round at these words, and said to him: "There is a penny for you: go to all your other brothers, and if each one gives you as much, you will be richer than I am." It was not a good-natured Maximilian that was destined to wear the imperial crown. The times were changing; men of overweening ambition were about to dispute the throne of the emperors of the West; a strong hand was to grasp the reins of the empire, and long and bloody wars were on the point of succeeding a profound peace.

Three kings claimed the crown of the Caesars from the assembly at Frankfort. A youthful prince, grandson of the last emperor, born in the first year of the century, and consequently nineteen years old, appeared first. His name was Charles, and he was born at Ghent. His paternal grandmother, Mary, daughter of Charles the Bold, had bequeathed to him Flanders and the rich domains of Burgundy. His mother, Joanna, daughter of

Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, and wife of Philip the Emperor Maximilian's son, had transmitted to him the united crowns of the two Spains, Naples, and Sicily, to which Christopher Columbus had recently added a new world. His grandfather's death now put him in possession of the hereditary states of Austria. This young prince, endowed with great intelligence, and amiable whenever it pleased him to be so, joined to a taste for military exercises, in which the famous dukes of Burgundy had long distinguished themselves, — to the subtlety and penetration of the Italians, — to the respect for existing institutions which still characterizes the house of Austria, and which promised a firm defender to the papacy, — an extensive knowledge of public affairs which he had acquired under the direction of Chievres; for, from the age of fifteen years, he had attended all the deliberations of his councils. Qualities so various were covered and concealed, as it were, by his Spanish taciturnity and reserve; there was an air of melancholy in his long visage. "He was pious and silent," said Luther; "I will wager that he does not talk so much in a year as I do in a day." If Charles

had grown up under free and christian influences, he would perhaps have been one of the most meritorious princes recorded in history; but politics absorbed his whole life, and blighted his naturally amiable character.

The youthful Charles, not content with the scepters he already grasped in his hand, aspired to the imperial dignity. “It is a beam of sunshine that casts a splendor upon the house on which it falls,” said many; “but stretch forth the hand to seize it, and you find nothing.” Charles, on the contrary, looked upon it as the summit of all earthly grandeur, and a means of obtaining a magical influence over the minds of nations.

Francis I, king of France, was the second candidate. The young paladins of the court of this chivalrous sovereign were ever repeating that he ought, like Charlemagne, to be emperor of all the West, and reviving the exploits of the knights of old, attack the Crescent that threatened the empire, crush the infidels, and recover the Holy Sepulchre.

“You should convince the dukes of Austria that the imperial crown is not hereditary,” said the ambassadors of Francis to the electors. “Besides, in the present state of affairs, Germany requires, not a youth of nineteen, but a prince who with a tried judgment combines talents already proved.

Francis will unite the arms of France and Lombardy with those of Germany to make war on the Mussulmans. As sovereign of the duchy of Milan, he is already a member of the empire.” The French ambassadors strengthened their arguments by four hundred thousand crowns which they expended in buying votes, and in banquets which the guest generally quitted in a state of inebriation.

Lastly, Henry VIII of England, jealous of the influence the choice of the electors would give Francis or Charles, also entered the lists; but he soon left these two powerful rivals to dispute the crown between them.

The electors were not very favorably disposed towards either. “Our people,” thought they, “will

consider the King of France as a foreign master, and this master may wrest even from us that independence of which the great lords of his own kingdom have recently been deprived.” As for Charles, it was an old maxim with the electors never to select a prince who already played an important part in the empire. The pope participated in these fears. He was opposed to the King of Naples, his neighbor, and to the King of France, whose enterprising spirit alarmed him.

“Choose rather one of yourselves,” was the advice he sent to the electors.

The Elector of Treves proposed to nominate Frederick of Saxony; and the imperial crown was laid at the feet of this friend to Luther.

Such a choice would have gained the approbation of the whole of Germany. Frederick’s wisdom and love for the people were well known.

During the revolt of Erfurth, he had been advised to take the city by storm.

He refused, that he might avoid bloodshed. “But it will not cost five men,” was the reply. — “A single man would be too many,” answered the prince. It appeared that the election of the protector of the Reformation would secure the triumph of that work. Ought not Frederick to have seen a call from God in this wish of the electors? Who could have been better suited to preside over the destinies of the empire than this wise prince? Who could have been stronger against the Turks than a truly Christian emperor? The refusal of the Elector of Saxony, so extolled by historians, may have been a fault on the part of this prince. Perhaps to him must be partly ascribed the contests that devastated Germany in afterdays.

But it is a difficult matter to decide whether Frederick deserves to be blamed for want of faith, or honored for his humility. He thought that the very safety of the empire required him to refuse the crown. “We need an emperor more powerful than myself to preserve Germany,” said this modest and disinterested prince. “The Turk is at our gates. The

King of Spain, whose hereditary possessions of Austria border on the threatened frontier, is its natural defender." The Roman legate, seeing that Charles would be elected, declared that the pope withdrew his objections; and on the 28th of June the grandson of Maximilian was nominated emperor. "God," said Frederick not long after, "hath given him to us in His favor and in His anger." The Spanish envoys offered 30,000 gold florins to the Elector of Saxony, as a testimonial of their master's gratitude; but this prince refused them, and forbade his ministers to accept of any present. At the same time, he secured the liberties of Germany by a capitulation to which Charles's envoys swore in his name. The circumstances under which the latter assumed the imperial crown seemed, moreover, to give a stronger pledge than these oaths in favor of German liberty and of the work of the Reformation. This youthful prince was jealous of the laurels that his rival Francis I had gathered at Marignan. The struggle would still be continued in Italy, and the interval thus employed would doubtless suffice for the Reformation to gain strength. Charles quitted Spain in May 1520, and

was crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle on the 22nd of October.

Chapter 2

Luther’s Letter to the Emperor

Luther had foreseen that the cause of the Reformation would soon be carried before the new emperor. He wrote to Charles, while this prince was yet at Madrid: “If the cause that I defend,” said he, “is worthy of appearing before the throne of the Majesty of heaven, it ought not to be unworthy of engaging the attention of a prince of this world. O Charles! first of the kings of the earth! I throw myself a suppliant at the feet of your most serene majesty. Deign to receive under the shadow of your wings, not by me, but the cause of that eternal truth, for the defense of which God has intrusted you with the sword.” The young monarch laid aside this singular letter from a German monk, and made no reply to it.

While Luther was vainly turning towards Madrid, the storm seemed to increase around him. Fanaticism was kindling in Germany. Hochstraten, indefatigable in his attempts at persecution, had

extracted certain theses from Luther's writings. At his demand, the universities of Cologne and Louvain had condemned these works. That of Erfurth, still exasperated at Luther's preference for Wittenberg, was about to follow their example. But having been informed of it, the doctor wrote to Lange so spirited a letter, that the Erfurth divines were dismayed and kept silent. The condemnation pronounced at Cologne and Louvain sufficed, however, to inflame men's minds. Nay, more: the priests of Meissen, who had espoused Emser's quarrel, said publicly (Melancthon is our authority) that he who should kill Luther would be without sin. "Now is the time," said Luther, "when men will think they do Christ a service by putting us to death." These homicidal words were destined to produce their fruit in due season.

One day, says a biographer, as Luther was in front of the Augustine cloister, a stranger, who held a pistol concealed under his cloak, accosted him in these words: "Why do you go thus alone?" — "I am in God's hands," replied Luther. "He is my strength and my shield. What can man do unto

me?” Upon this the stranger turned pale (adds the historian), and fled away trembling. Serra Longa, the ambassador at the Augsburg conference, wrote to the elector about this time: “Let not Luther find an asylum in the states of your highness; let him be rejected of all, and stoned in the face of heaven; that will be more pleasing to me than if I received ten thousand crowns from you.”

But it was particularly in the direction of Rome that the storm was gathering. Valentine Teutleben, a Thuringian nobleman, vicar to the Archbishop of Mentz, and a zealous partisan of the papacy, was the Elector of Saxony’s representative at the papal court. Teutleben, ashamed of the protection accorded by his master to an heretical monk, was impatient at seeing his mission paralyzed by this imprudent conduct. He imagined that, by alarming the elector, he would induce him to abandon the rebellious divine. “They will not listen to me here,” wrote he to his master, “because of the protection you show to Luther.” But the Romans were deceived if they thought to frighten the prudent Frederick. This prince was aware that the will of

God and the movements of nations were more irresistible than the decrees of the papal chancery. He ordered his envoy to intimate to the pope that, far from defending Luther, he had always left him to defend himself; besides, he had already called upon him to quit Saxony and the university; that the doctor had declared his willingness to obey, and that he would not then be in the electoral states, if the legate himself, Charles of Miltitz, had not entreated the prince to keep him near at hand, for fear that, by going to other countries, Luther would act with greater liberty than even in Saxony. Frederick went farther than this: he desired to enlighten Rome. “Germany,” continues he in his letter, “now possesses a great number of learned men, well taught in every language and science; the laity themselves begin to have understanding, and to love the Holy Scriptures; if, therefore, the reasonable conditions of Dr. Luther are rejected, there is great cause to fear that peace will never be reestablished.

Luther’s doctrine has struck deep root into many hearts. If, instead of refuting it by the

testimony of the Bible, you strive to destroy him by the thunderbolts of the ecclesiastical authority, great scandals will arise, and ruinous and terrible revolts will be excited." The elector, having the greatest confidence in Luther, communicated Teutleben's letter to him, with another that he had received from Cardinal Saint George. The reformer was agitated as he read them. He immediately perceived the dangers by which he was surrounded. His soul was for a time quite overwhelmed. But it was in such moments that the whole strength of his faith shone forth. Often weak, and ready to fall into dejection, he rose again, and appeared greater in the midst of the tempest.

He longed to be delivered from such trials; but he saw at what price peace was offered to him, and he indignantly rejected it. "Hold my peace!" exclaimed he, "I am disposed to do so, if they will permit me; that is, if they will make others keep silence. If any one desires my places, let him take them; if any one desires to destroy my writings, let him burn them. I am ready to keep quiet, provided they do not require that the truth of the Gospel

should be silent also. I do not ask for a cardinal's hat; I ask not for gold, or for anything that Rome values. There is nothing in the world they cannot obtain from me, provided they will not shut up the way of salvation against Christians. Their threats do not alarm me, their promises cannot seduce me."

Animated with such sentiments, Luther soon recovered his militant disposition, and preferred the christian warfare to the calm of solitude.

One night was sufficient to bring back his desire of overthrowing Rome. "I have taken my part," wrote he on the morrow; "I despise the fury of Rome, and contemn her favors. No more reconciliation, no more communication with her for ever. Let her condemn me, let her burn my writings! In my turn, I will condemn and publicly burn the pontifical law, — that nest of every heresy. The moderation I have hitherto shown has been unavailing; I now renounce it!"

His friends were far from being thus tranquil.

Great was the consternation at Wittenberg. “We are in a state of extraordinary expectation,” said Melancthon; “I would rather die than be separated from Luther. If God does not help us, we shall all perish.” — “Our dear Luther is still alive,” wrote he a month later, in his anxiety; “may it please God to grant him a long life! for the Roman sycophants are making every exertion to put him to death. Let us pray that this sole avenger of sacred theology may long survive.” These prayers were heard. The warning the elector had given Rome through his envoy was not without foundation. Luther’s words had found an echo everywhere — in cottages and convents, in the homes of the citizens and in the castles of the nobles, in the universities and in the palaces of kings. “If my life,” he had said to Duke John of Saxony, “has been instrumental to the conversion of a single man, I shall willingly consent to see all my books perish.” It was not one man, it was a great multitude, that had found the light in the writings of the humble doctor.

Everywhere, accordingly, were men to be found ready to protect him. The sword intended to

slay him was forging in the Vatical but heroes were springing up in Germany to shield him with their bodies. At the moment when the bishops were chafing with rage, when princes kept silence, when the people were in expectation, and when the first murmurs of the thunder were beginning to be heard from the Seven Hills, God aroused the German nobles to make a rampart for his servant. Sylvester of Schaumburg, one of the most powerful knights of Franconia, sent his son to Wittenberg at this time with a letter for the reformer. “Your life is in danger,” wrote he. “If the support of the electors, princes, or magistrates fail you, I entreat you to beware of going to Bohemia, where in former times learned men have had much to undergo; rather come to me. God willing, I shall soon have collected more than a hundred gentlemen, and with their help I shall be able to protect you from every danger.” Francis of Sickingen, the hero of his age, of whose intrepid courage we have already been witnesses, loved the reformer, because he found him worthy of being loved, and also because he was hated by the monks. “My services, my goods, and my body, all that I possess,” wrote he to

Luther, “are at your disposal. You desire to maintain the christian truth: I am ready to aid you in the work.” Harmurth of Cronberg held the same language. Lastly, Ulric of Hutten, the poet and valiant knight of the sixteenth century, never ceased speaking in Luther’s favor. But what a contrast between these two men! Hutten wrote to the reformer: “It is with swords and with bows, with javelins and bombs, that we must crush the fury of the devil.” Luther on receiving these letters exclaimed: “I will not have recourse to arms and bloodshed in defense of the Gospel. By the Word the earth has been subdued; by the Word the Church has been saved; and by the Word also it shall be re-established.” — “I do not despise his offer,” said he at another time on receiving Schaumburg’s letter, which we have mentioned above, “but I will rely upon nothing but Jesus Christ.” It was not thus the Roman pontiffs spoke when they waded in the blood of the Waldenses and Albigenses. Hutten felt the difference between his cause and Luther’s, and he accordingly wrote to him with noblemindedness: “As for me, I am busied with the affairs of men; but you soar far

higher, and are occupied solely with those of God." He then set out to win, if possible, Charles and Ferdinand to the side of truth. Luther at this time met with a still more illustrious protector. Erasmus, whom the Romanists so often quote against the Reformation, raised his voice and undertook the reformer's defense, after his own fashion, however, that is to say, without any show of defending him. On the 1st of November 1519, this patriarch of learning wrote to Albert, elector of Mentz and primate of all Germany, a letter in which, after describing in vivid colors the corruption of the church, he says: "This is what stirred up Luther, and made him oppose the intolerable imprudence of certain doctors. For what other motive can we ascribe to a man who seeks not honors and who cares not for money? Luther has dared doubt the virtue of indulgences; but others before him had most unblushingly affirmed it. He feared not to speak, certainly with little moderation, against the power of the Roman pontiff; but others before him had extolled it without reserve. He has dared contemn the decrees of St. Thomas, but the Dominicans had set them almost above the Gospel.

He has dared give utterance to his scruples about confession, but the monks continually made use of this ordinance as a net in which to catch and enslave the consciences of men. Pious souls were grieved at hearing that in the universities there was little mention of the evangelical doctrine; that in the assemblies of Christians very little was heard of Christ; that nothing was there talked of, except the power of the pontiff, and the opinions of the Romish doctors; and that the whole sermon was a mere matter of lucre, flattery, ambition, and imposture. It is to such a state of affairs that we should ascribe Luther's violent language." Such as Erasmus's opinion on the state of the Church and on the reformer. This letter, which was published by Ulric Hutten, then residing at the court of Mentz, made a profound impression.

At the same time, men more obscure than Erasmus and than all the knights, but were destined to be more powerful auxiliaries, rallied round Luther in every direction. Doctor Botzhemus Abstemius, canon of Constance, wrote to him thus: "Now that you have become the friend of the

universe, or at least of the better part of the world, that is to say, of good and true Christians, you must also become mine, whether you will or not! I am so delighted with your writings, that nothing gives me greater pleasure than to be living at a time when not only profane but also sacred literature is resuming its pristine splendor." And at nearly the same period Gaspard Hedio, preacher at Basle, wrote to the reformer: "Most dear sir, I see that your doctrine is of God, and that it cannot be destroyed; that it becomes daily more efficacious; and that every hour it is winning souls to Christ by turning them away from sin and attracting them to real piety. Do not halt therefore, O liberator, but exert all your power to restore the yoke of Christ, so light and easy to bear. Be yourself the general, and we will follow after you, like soldiers whom nothing can tear from you." Thus at one time Luther's enemies oppress him, at another his friends spring up to defend him. "My bark," said he, "floats to and fro, the sport of the winds; hope and fear prevail by turns; but what matters it!" And yet these testimonies of sympathy were not without influence upon his mind. "The Lord reigns," said

he, “I see him there, as if I could touch him.” Luther felt that he was not alone; his words had borne fruit, and this thought filled him with fresh courage. The fear of compromising the elector no longer checked him, when he found other defenders ready to brave the anger of Rome. He became more free, and if possible more determined.

This is an important epoch in the development of Luther’s character.

“Rome ought to understand,” wrote he at this period to the elector’s chaplain, “that, even should she succeed by her threats in expelling me from Wittenberg, she would only injure her cause. It is not in Bohemia, but in the very heart of Germany that those are to be found who are ready to defend me against the thunders of the papacy. If I have not done my enemies all the harm I am preparing for them, they must ascribe it neither to my moderation nor to their tyranny, but to the elector’s name and to the interests of the university of Wittenberg, which I feared to compromise: now that I have

such fears no longer, they will see me fall with fresh vigor upon Rome and upon her courtiers." And yet it was not on the great that Luther fixed his hopes. He had been often solicited to dedicate a book to Duke John, the elector's brother. He had not done so. "I am afraid," said he, "that the suggestion comes from himself. Holy Scripture should subserve the glory of God's name alone." Luther now recovered from his fears, and dedicated his sermon on Good Works to Duke John. This is one of the writings in which the reformer lays down with the greatest force the doctrine of justification by faith, — that powerful truth, whose strength he sets far above the sword of Hutten, the army of Sickengen, and the protection of dukes and electors.

"The first, the noblest, the sublimest of all works," says he, "is faith in Jesus Christ. It is from this work that all other works must proceed: they are but the vassals of faith, and receive their efficacy from it alone.

"If a man feels in his heart the assurance that

what he has done is acceptable to God, the work is good, if it were merely the lifting up of a straw; but if he have not this assurance, his work is not good, even should he raise the dead. A heathen, a Jew, a Turk, a sinner, can perform all the other works; but to trust firmly in God, and to feel an assurance that we are accepted by him, is what a Christian, strong in grace, alone is capable of doing.

“A Christian who possesses faith in God does everything with liberty and joy; while the man who is not at one with God is full of care and kept in bondage; he asks himself with anguish how many works he should perform; he runs to and fro; he questions this man and that; he nowhere finds peace, and does everything with sorrow and fear.

“Consequently, I have always extolled faith. But in the world it is otherwise. There, the essential thing is to have many works — works high and great, and of every dimension, without caring whether they are quickened by faith. Thus, men build their peace, not on God’s good pleasure, but on their won merits, that is to say, on sand.

(Matthew 7:27.) “To preach faith (it has been said) is to prevent good works; but if a man should possess the strength of all men united, or even of all creatures, this sole obligation of living in faith would be a task too great for him ever to accomplish. If I say to a sick man: ‘Be well, and thou shalt have the use of thy limbs,’ will any one say that I forbid him to use his limbs? Must not health precede labor?

It is the same when we preach faith: it should go before works in order that the works themselves should exist.

“Where then, you will say, can we find this faith, and how can we receive it? This is in truth what it is most important to know. Faith comes solely from Jesus, who was promised and given freely.

“O man! figure Jesus Christ to yourself, and contemplate how God in him has shown thee his mercy, without any merit on thy part going before. Draw from this image of his grace the faith and

assurance that all thy sins are forgiven thee. Works cannot produce it. It flows from the blood, and wounds, and death of Christ; thence it wells forth into our hearts. Christ is the rock whence flow milk and honey." (Deuteronomy 32.) As we cannot notice all Luther's writings, we have quoted a few short passages from this discourse on Good Works, in consequence of the opinion the reformer himself entertained of it. "In my own judgment," said he, "it is the best I ever published." And he added immediately this deep reflection: "But I know that when I please myself with what I write, the infection of that bad leaven hinders it from pleasing others." Melancthon, in forwarding this discourse to a friend, accompanied it with these words: "There is no one among all the Greek and Latin writers who has ever come nearer than Luther to the spirit of St. Paul."

Chapter 3

The Papacy attacked

But there was another evil in the Church besides the substitution of a system of meritorious works for the grand idea of grace and amnesty. A haughty power had arisen in the midst of the shepherds of Christ's flock. Luther prepared to attack this usurped authority. Already a vague and distant rumor announced the success of Dr. Eck's intrigues at Rome.

This rumor aroused the militant spirit of the reformer, who, in the midst of all his troubles, had studied in his retirement the rise, progress, and usurpations of the papacy. His discoveries had filled him with surprise.

He no longer hesitated to make them known, and to strike the blow which, like Moses' rod in ancient times, was to awaken a people who had long slumbered in captivity. Even before Rome had time to publish her formidable bull, it was he who

hurled his declaration of war against her.

“The time to be silent is past,” exclaimed he; “the time to speak is come!

At last, we must unveil the mysteries of Antichrist.” On the 23rd of June 1520, he published his famous Appeal to his Imperial Majesty and to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, on the Reformation of Christianity. This work was the signal of the attack that was to decide both the rupture and the victory.

“It is not through presumption,” said he at the opening of this address, “that I, a man of the people, venture to speak to your lordships. The misery and oppression that at this hour weigh down all the states of Christendom, and particularly Germany, extort from me a cry of distress. I must call for help; I must see if God will not give his Spirit to some man in our own country, and thus stretch forth his hand to save our wretched nation. God has placed over us a young and generous prince, and has thus filled our hearts with great

expectations. But on our parts we must do everything that lies in our power.

“Now the first requisite is, not to trust in our own strength, or in our lofty wisdom. If we begin a good work with confidence in ourselves, God overthrows and destroys it. Frederick I, Frederick II, and many other emperors besides, before whom the world trembled, have been trodden under foot by the popes, because they trusted more in their own strength than in God. Therefore they could not but fall. It is against the powers of hell that we have to contend in this struggle. Hoping nothing from the strength of arms, humbly trusting in the Lord, looking more to the distress of Christendom than to the crimes of the wicked — this is how we must set to work. Otherwise the work will have a prosperous look at the beginning; but suddenly, in the midst of the contest, confusion will enter in, evil minds will cause incalculable disasters, and the whole world will be deluged with blood. The greater our power, the greater also is our danger, if we do not walk in the fear of the Lord.” After this prelude, Luther continues thus: — “The Romans

have raised around themselves three walls to protect them against every kind of reformation. Have they been attacked by the temporal power? — they have asserted that it had no authority over them, and that the spiritual power was superior to it. Have they been rebuked by Holy Scripture? — they have replied that no one is able to interpret it except the pope. Have they been threatened with a council? — no one (said they) but the sovereign pontiff has authority to convoke one.

“They have thus despoiled us of the three rods destined to correct them, and have given themselves up to every wickedness. But now may God be our helper, and give as one of those trumpets that overthrew the walls of Jericho. With our breath let us throw down those barriers of paper and straw which the Romans have built around them, and upraise the rods which punish the wicked, by exposing the wiles of the devil.” Luther now begins the attack. He shakes to its foundation that papal monarchy which for ages had combined the people of the West in one body under the scepter of the Roman bishop. That there is no

sacerdotal caste in Christianity, is the truth which he powerfully sets forth at the beginning, — a truth hidden from the eyes of the Church from the earliest ages.

“It has been said,” writes Luther, “that the pope, the bishops, the priests, and all those who people the convents, form the spiritual or ecclesiastical state; and that the princes, the nobility, the citizens, and peasants, form the secular or lay estate. This is a fine story. Let no person, however, be startled at it. All Christians belong to the spiritual state, and there is no other difference between them than that arising from the functions which they discharge. We have all one baptism, one faith; and this is it which constitutes the spiritual man. The unction, the tonsure, ordination, consecration by the bishop or the pope, may make a hypocrite, but never a spiritual man. We are all consecrated priests by baptism, as Saint Peter says: Ye are priests and kings, although it does not belong to all to exercise such offices, for no one can take what is common to all without the consent of the community. But if we possess not

this Divine consecration, the pope's anointing can never make a priest. If ten brothers, sons of a king, having equal claims to the inheritance, select one of them to administer it for them they would all be kings, and yet only one of them would be the administrator of their common power. So it is with the Church.

If a few pious laymen were banished to a desert place, and if, not having among them a priest consecrated by a bishop, they should agree to choose one of their own number, married or not, this man would be as truly a priest as if all the bishops in the world had consecrated him. Thus Augustine, Ambrose, and Cyprian were elected.

"Hence it follows that laymen and priests, princes and bishops, or, as they say, the clergy and laity, have nothing but their functions to distinguish them. They have all the same estate, but have not all the same work to perform.

"If this be true, why should not the magistrate chastise the clergy?

The secular power was established by God to punish the wicked and to protect the good. And it must be allowed to act throughout all Christendom, whomsoever it may touch, be he pope, bishop, priest, monk, or nun. St. Paul says to all Christians: Let every one (and consequently the pope also) be subject unto the higher powers, for they bear not the sword in vain." Luther, having in like manner overthrown the two other walls, passes in review all the corruptions of Rome. He sets forth, in an eminently popular style of eloquence, the evils that had been pointed out for centuries past.

Never had a nobler protest been heard. The assembly before which Luther spoke was the Church; the power whose corruptions he attacked was that papacy which for ages had oppressed all nations with its weight; and the reformation he so loudly called for was destined to exercise its powerful influence over all Christendom, — in all the world, — so long as the human race shall endure.

He begins with the pope. “It is a horrible thing,” says he, “to behold the man who styles himself Christ’s vice-gerent displaying a magnificence that no emperor can equal. Is this being like the poor Jesus, or the humble Peter? He is (say they) the lord of the world! But Christ, whose vicar he boasts of being, has said, My kingdom is not of this world. Can the dominions of a vicar extend beyond those of his superior?” Luther now proceeds to describe the effects of the papal rule. “Do you know what is the use of cardinals? I will tell you. Italy and Germany have many convents, religious foundations, and richly endowed benefices. How can this wealth be drawn to Rome? Cardinals have been created; these cloisters and prelacies have been given to them; and now.....Italy is almost deserted, the convents are in ruins, the bishoprics devoured, the cities decayed, the inhabitants corrupted, religious worship is expiring, and preaching abolished!.....And why is this? Because all the wealth of the churches must go to Rome. The Turk himself would never have so ruined Italy!” Luther next turns to his fellowcountrymen: “And now that

they have thus sucked all the blood of their own nation, they come into Germany; they begin tenderly; but let us be on our guard, or Germany will erelong be like Italy! We have already a few cardinals. Before the dull Germans comprehend our design (think they) they will no longer have either bishopric, convent, or benefice, penny or farthing left. Antichrist must possess the treasures of the earth. Thirty or forty cardinals will be created in one day. Bamberg will be given to one, the bishopric of Wurtzburg to another; rich cures will be attached to them, until the cities and churches are desolate. And then the pope will say: I am Christ's vicar, and the shepherd of his flocks. Let the Germans be submissive!" Luther's indignation is kindled: "What! shall we Germans endure such robberies and such extortions from the pope? If the kingdom of France has been able to defend itself, why should we permit ourselves to be thus ridiculed and laughed at? Oh! if they only despoiled us of our goods! But they lay waste the churches, fleece the sheep of Christ, abolish religious worship, and annihilate the Word of God." Luther here exposes "the practices of Rome"

to obtain the money and the revenues of Germany. Annats, palliums, commendams, administrations, reversions, incorporations, reserves, etc. — he passes them all in review; and then he says: “Let us endeavor to check such desolation and wretchedness. If we desire to march against the Turks, let us march against those who are the worst Turks of all. If we hang thieves, and decapitate highway robbers, let us not permit Romish avarice to escape, which is the greatest of thieves and robbers, and that too in the name of St. Peter and of Jesus Christ! Who can suffer this? Who can be silent? All that the pope possesses, has he not gained by plunder? For he has neither bought it, nor inherited it from St. Peter, nor gained it by the sweat of his brow. Whence then has he all this?” Luther proposes remedies for these evils, and calls energetically upon the nobility of Germany to put an end to these Romish depredations. He then comes to the reformation of the pope himself: “Is it not ridiculous,” says he, “that the pope pretends to be the lawful heir to the empire? Who gave it him? Was it Jesus Christ, when he said: The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but it shall

not be so among you? (Luke 22:25, 26.) How is it possible to govern an empire, and at the same time preach, pray, study, and take care of the poor? Jesus Christ forbade his ministers to carry with them either gold or two coats, because they would be unable to discharge the duties of their ministry if they were not free from all other care; and yet the pope would govern the empire and still remain pope." Luther continues stripping the sovereign pontiff: "Let the pope renounce every claim on the kingdom of Naples and Sicily. He has no more right to it than I have. It is unjustly and in opposition to all the commandments of Christ that he possesses Bologna, Imola, Ravenna, the Romagna, the March of Ancona, etc. No man that warreth, says Saint Paul, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life. (2 Timothy 2:4.) Yet the pope, who pretends to be the leader of the Church militant, entangles himself with the affairs of this life more than any emperor or king. We must relieve him from all this toil. Let the emperor put the bible and a prayer-book into the pope's hands, in order that he may leave the cares of government to the kings, and confine himself to preaching and

praying.” Luther will no more suffer the pope’s spiritual power in Germany than his temporal power in Italy. “First of all,” says he, “we must expel from every German state those papal legates, with their pretended benefits which they sell us at their weight in gold, and which are downright impositions. They take our money, and for what? to legalize their illgotten gains, to absolve from all oaths, to teach us to be wanting in fidelity, to instruct us how to sin, and to lead us direct to hell. Hearest thou this, O pope! not most holy, but most sinful pope! — May God from his throne in heaven soon hurl thee from thy throne into the bottomless pit!” The christian tribune pursues his course. After having called the pope to his bar, he summons before him all the corruptions that form the papal train, and purposes sweeping from the floor of the Church the rubbish by which it was encumbered. He begins with the monks: — “And now then I come to that sluggish troop which promises much but does little. Do not be angry, my dear sirs, my intentions are good: what I have to say is a truth at once sweet and bitter; namely, no more cloisters must be built for mendicant friars. We have,

indeed, too many already, and would to God that they were all pulled down. Strolling through a country like beggars never has done and never can do good." The marriage of the clergy now has its turn, and this is the first time Luther speaks of it: — "To what a sad state have the clergy fallen, and how many priests do we not find burdened with women, and children, and remorse, and yet no one comes to their aid! It is all very well for the pope and the bishops to let things go on as before, and for that to continue lost which is lost; but I am determined to save my conscience, and to open my mouth freely: after that, let the pope, the bishops, and any one who pleases, take offense at it!.....I assert, then, that according to the appointment of Christ and his apostles, each city should have a pastor or bishop, and that this pastor may have a wife, as Saint Paul writes to Timothy: A bishop must be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2), and as is still practiced in the Greek Church. But the devil has persuaded the pope, as the same apostle says to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:1 to 3), to forbid the clergy to marry. And hence have proceeded miseries so numerous that we cannot

mention all. What is to be done? How can we save so many pastors, in whom we have no fault to find, except that they live with a woman, to whom they would with all their heart be legitimately married? Ah let them quiet their consciences! let them take this woman as their lawful wife, and let them live virtuously with her not troubling themselves whether the pope is pleased or not. The salvation of your soul is greater consequence to you than tyrannical and arbitrary laws, that do not emanate from the Lord." It is in this way that the Reformation aimed a restoring purity of morals in the Church. The reformer continues: — "Let all festivals be abolished, and let none but Sunday be observed; or if people desire to keep the great Christian festivals, let them be celebrated only in the morning, and let the rest of the day be like any other working-day. For as on those days men do nothing but drink, gamble, indulge in every sin, or remain idle, they offend God on the festivals more than at other times." He next attacks the commemorations, which he styles mere taverns; and after them the fasts and religious fraternities. — He not only desires to put an end to abuses, he

wishes also to put away schism. “It is high time,” says he, “that we busied ourselves seriously with the cause of the Bohemians, — that we put a stop to envy and hatred, — and that we united with them.” After proposing some excellent means of reconciliation, he adds: “We must convince heretics by Scripture, as did the ancient Fathers, and not subdue them by fire. In this latter system, the executioners would be the most learned doctors in the world.....Oh! would to God that on both sides we stretched forth our hands in brotherly humility, instead of being inflexible in the sentiment of our strength and of our right! Charity is more necessary than the papacy of Rome. I have now done all that is in my power. If the pope and his adherents oppose this, the responsibility will fall on them. The pope should be ready to renounce his papacy, all his possessions, and all his honors, if he could by that means save a single soul. But he would rather see all the world perish than bate even a hair’s breadth of the power he has usurped! .....I am clear of these things.” Luther next proceeds to the universities and schools: — “I am much afraid that the universities will prove to be the great gates

of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, and engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount.

Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt." Weighty words, upon which governments, learned men, and parents in every age should seriously meditate!

Towards the end of this appeal he returns to the empire and to the emperor: — "The pope, unable to manage at his will the ancient masters of the Roman empire, conceived a plan of taking away their title and their empire, and bestowing them on us Germans. Thus it happened that we became the vassals of the pope. For the pope took possession of Rome, and compelled the emperor by an oath never to reside there; whence it is that the emperor is emperor of Rome, without Rome. We possess the name: the pope has the country and the cities. We have the title and arms of the empire; the pope its treasures, power, privileges, and liberties. The

pope eats the fruit, and we play with the husk. It is thus that the pride and tyranny of the Romans have always abused our simplicity.

“But now may God, who has given us such an empire, be our helper! Let us act in conformity with our name, title, and arms; let us preserve our liberty; and let the Romans learn to appreciate what God has given us by their hands! They boast of having given us an empire. Well then, let us take what belongs to us! Let the pope resign to us Rome and every portion of the empire that he still holds! Let him put an end to his taxes and extortions! Let him restore our liberty, our power, our property, our honor, our souls, and our bodies! Let the empire be all that an empire ought to be, and let the sword of princes no longer be constrained to bow before the hypocritical pretensions of a pope!” In these words there are not only energy and enthusiasm, but also a lofty strain of reasoning. Did any orator ever speak thus to the nobility of the empire, and to the emperor himself? Far from being surprised that so many German states separated from Rome, ought we not rather to feel

astonished that all Germany did not march to the banks of the Tiber to resume that imperial power whose attributes the popes had so imprudently placed on the brow of its sovereign?

Luther concludes this courageous appeal in these words: — “I can very well imagine that I have pitched my song too high, proposed many things that will seem impossible, and attacked many errors rather too violently. But what can I do? Let the world be offended with me, rather than God!.....They can but take away my life. I have often proposed peace to my adversaries. But God, by their instrumentality, has compelled me continually to cry louder and louder against them. I have still another song in reserve against Rome. If their ears itch, I will sing it them, and loudly too.

Dost thou clearly understand, O Rome, what I mean?”.....

This is probably an allusion to a work on the papacy that Luther had some intention of publishing, but which was withheld. About this

time the Rector Burkhardt wrote to Spengler: “There is also a little treatise De execranda Venere Romanorum; but it is kept in reserve.” The title promised something very offensive; and we should rejoice that Luther had the moderation not to publish this writing.

“If my cause is just,” continues he, “it will be condemned by all the world, and justified only by Christ in heaven. Let them come on, then, pope, bishops, priests, monks, and doctors! let them put forth all their zeal! let them give the rein to all their fury! These are, in truth, the men who ought to persecute the truth, as every age has witnessed.” Whence did this monk acquire so clear an understanding of public affairs, which even the states of the empire often found so difficult to elucidate?

Whence did this German derive the courage which made him raise his head in the midst of a nation so long enslaved, and aim such violent blows at the papacy? What was the mysterious power that animated him? Might we not be led to

say that he had heard these words addressed by God to a man of the olden time: Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces.

As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks.

This exhortation, which was addressed to the German nobility, soon reached all those for whom it had been written. It circulated through Germany with inconceivable rapidity. Luther's friends trembled; Staupitz and those who desired to employ mild measures found the blow too severe. "In our days," replied Luther, "everything that is handled gently falls into oblivion, and no one cares about it." At the same time he gave striking evidence of single-mindedness and humility. He did not yet know himself. "I cannot tell what to say of myself," wrote he. "Perhaps I am Philip's (Melancthon's) forerunner. I am preparing the way for him, like Elias, in spirit and in power. It is he who will one day trouble Israel and the house of Ahab." But there was no need to wait for another

than him who had already appeared. The house of Ahab was already shaken. The Appeal to the German Nobility was published on the 26th June 1520; in a short time four thousand copies were sold, a number unprecedented in those days.

The astonishment was universal. This writing produced a powerful sensation among the people. The vigor, life, perspicuity, and generous boldness that breathed throughout made it a truly popular work. The people felt at last that he who spoke to them loved them also. The confused views of a great number of wise men were cleared up. The Romish usurpations became evident to every mind. No one at Wittenberg any longer doubted that the pope was Antichrist. Even the elector's court, so circumspect and timid, did not disapprove of the reformer: it waited patiently. But the nobility and the people did not wait. The nation was reanimated. Luther's voice had shaken it; it was won over, and rallied round the standard that he had uplifted. Nothing could have been more advantageous to the reformer than this publication. In the palaces and castles, in the homes of the

citizens and the cottages of the peasants, all were now prepared, and defended as it were with a breastplate, against the sentence of condemnation that was about to fall upon this prophet of the people. All Germany was on fire. Let the bull arrive! not by such means will the conflagration be extinguished.

Chapter 4

Preparations at Rome

Every preparation was made at Rome for condemning the defender of the liberty of the Church. That Church had long been living in a state of haughty security. For several years the monks had been accusing Leo X of caring only for luxury and pleasure, of occupying himself solely with the chase, the theater, and music, while the Church was tottering to its fall.

At length, aroused by the clamors of Dr. Eck, who had come from Leipsic to invoke the power of the Vatican, pope, cardinals, monks, and all Rome, awoke, and thought of saving the papacy.

Rome indeed was compelled to have recourse to the severest measures.

The gauntlet had been thrown down; the combat must be to the death.

Luther did not attack the abuses of the Roman pontificate, but the pontificate itself. At his command he would have had the pope to descend humbly from his throne, and become a simple pastor or bishop on the banks of the Tiber. All the dignitaries of the Roman hierarchy were to renounce their wealth and their worldly glory, and become elders and deacons of the churches of Italy. All that splendor and power, which for ages had dazzled the West, was to vanish and give place to the humble simplicity of the primitive christian worship. God might have brought this about; He will do so in his own time; but it could not be expected from man. And even should any pope have been so disinterested or bold as to be willing to overthrow the ancient and costly edifice of the Roman Church, thousands of priests and bishops would have stretched out their hands to prevent its fall. The pope had received his power on the express condition of maintaining what was confided to him. Rome thought herself divinely appointed to the government of the Church. We cannot therefore be astonished that she prepared to strike the most terrible blows. And yet she

hesitated at first. Many cardinals and the pope himself were opposed to violent measures. The skillful Leo saw clearly that a decision, the execution of which depended on the very doubtful compliance of the civil power, might seriously compromise the authority of the Church. He was aware, besides, that the violent measures hitherto employed had only served to aggravate the mischief. Is it not possible to gain over this Saxon monk? asked the Roman politicians of one another. Will all the power of the Church, will all the craft of Italy fail? — They must negotiate still.

Eck accordingly met with powerful obstacles. He neglected nothing that might prevent such impious concessions. In every quarter of Rome he vented his rage, and called for revenge. The fanatical portion of the monks soon leagued with him. Strengthened by their alliance, he assailed the pope and cardinals with fresh courage. In his opinion, every attempt at conciliation would be useless. These (said he) are idle dreams with which you soothe yourselves at a distance from the danger. He knew the peril, for he had contended

with the audacious monk. He saw that there should be no delay in cutting off this gangrened limb, for fear the disease should infect the whole body. The impetuous disputant of Leipsic parried objection after objection, and with difficulty persuaded the pope. He desired to save Rome in spite of herself. He made every exertion, passing many hours together in deliberation in the pontiff's cabinet. He excited the court and the cloisters, the people and the Church. "Eck is stirring up the bottomless pit against me," said Luther; he is setting fire to the forests of Lebanon." But the victory, at the very moment Dr. Eck made most sure of it, appeared suddenly to escape from his hands. There existed even in Rome a respectable party to a certain extent favorable to Luther. On this point we have the testimony of a Roman citizen, one of whose letters, written in January 1521, has fortunately been preserved. "You should know," says he, "that in Rome there is scarcely an individual, at least among men of sound judgment, who is not aware that in many respects Luther speaks the truth." These respectable persons resisted the demands of Dr. Eck.

“We should take more time for reflection,” said they; “Luther should be opposed by moderation and by reason, and not by anathemas.” Leo X was again staggered. But immediately all that was bad in Rome burst out into violent fury. Eck mustered his recruits, and from all quarters, but especially from among the Dominicans, auxiliaries rallied round him, overflowing with anger and apprehension lest their victim should escape.

“It is unbecoming the dignity of the Roman pontiff,” said they, “to give a reason to every little wretch that presumes to raise his head; on the contrary, these obstinate people should be crushed by force, lest others, after them, should imitate their audacity. It was in this way that the punishment of John Huss, and of his disciple Jerome, terrified many; and if the same thing had been done to Reuchlin, Luther would never have dared what he has done.” At the same time the theologians of Cologne, Louvain, and other universities, and even princes of Germany, either by letter or through their envoys, daily urged the

pope in private by the most pressing entreaties.

But the most earnest solicitations proceeded from a banker who, by his wealth, possessed great influence at Rome, and who was familiarly styled “the king of crowns.” The papacy has always been more or less in the hands of those who have lent it money. This bander was Fugger, the treasurer of the indulgences. Inflamed with anger against Luther, and very uneasy about his profits and his wares, the Augsburg merchant strained every nerve to exasperate the pope: “Employ force against Luther,” said he, “and I will promise you the alliance and support of several princes.” It would even appear that it was he who had sent Eck to Rome. This gave the decisive blow. The “king of crowns” was victor in the pontifical city. It was not the sword of the Gaul, but well-stored purses that were on this occasion thrown into the balance. Eck prevailed at last.

The politicians were defeated by the fanatics in the papal councils. Leo gave way, and Luther’s condemnation was resolved upon. Eck breathed

again. His pride was flattered by the thought that it was he who had decided the destruction of his heretical rival, and thus saved the Church.

“It was fortunate,” said he, “that I came to Rome at this time, for they were but little acquainted with Luther’s errors. It will one day be known how much I have done in this cause.” Few were more active in supporting Doctor Eck than Sylvester Mazzolini de Prierio, master of the sacred palace. He had just published a work in which he laid down that not only did the infallible decision of all controverted points belong to the pope alone, but that the papal dominion was the fifth monarchy prophesied by Daniel, and the only true monarchy; that the pope was the first of all ecclesiastical princes, the father of all secular rulers, the chief of the world, and, essentially, the world itself. In another writing, he affirmed that the pope is as much superior to the emperor, as gold is more precious than lead; that the pope may elect and depose both emperors and electors, establish and annul positive rights, and that the emperor, though backed by all the laws and nations of

Christendom, cannot decide the least thing against the pope's will. Such was the voice that issued from the palace of the sovereign pontiff; such was the monstrous fiction which, combined with the scholastic doctrines, pretended to extinguish the dawning truth. If this fable had not been unmasked as it has been, and even by learned men in the Romish communion, there would have been neither true religion nor true history. The papacy is not only a lie in the face of the Bible; it is so even in the face of the annals of all nations. Thus the Reformation, by breaking its charm, emancipated not only the Church, but also kings and people. It has been said that the Reformation was a political work; in this sense it is true; but this is only a secondary sense.

Thus did God send forth a spirit of infatuation on the Roman doctors. The separation between truth and error had not become necessary; and error was the instrument of its accomplishment. If they had come to an agreement, it could only have been at the expense of truth; but, to take away the smallest part of itself, is to prepare the way for its

complete annihilation. It is like the insect which is said to die if one of its antennae be removed. Truth requires to be entire in all its members, in order to display that energy by which it is enabled to gain wide and salutary victories, and to propagate itself through future ages. To mingle a little error with truth is like throwing a grain of poison into a well-filled dish; this one grain is sufficient to change the nature of the food, and will cause death, slowly perhaps, but surely. Those who defend Christ's doctrine against the attacks of its adversaries, as jealously keep watch upon its remotest outworks as upon the body of the place; for no sooner has the enemy gained a footing in the least of these positions, than his victory is not far distant. The Roman pontiff resolved, at the period we have now reached, to rend the Church, and the fragment that remains in his grasp, however splendid it may be, ineffectually conceals under its gorgeous ornaments the deleterious principle by which it is attacked. Wherever the Word of God is, there is life. Luther, however great his courage, would probably have kept silence, if Rome had been silent herself, and had affected to make a few apparent

concessions. But God had not abandoned the Reformation to the weak heart of man. Luther was in the hands of One more far-sighted than himself. Divine Providence made use of the pope to break every link between the past and the future, and to launch the reformer into a new path, unknown and undistinguishable to his eyes, the approaches of which he never could have found unaided. The pontifical bull was the letter of divorcement that Rome gave to the pure Church of Jesus Christ in the person of him who was then its humble but faithful representative; and the Church accepted it, from that hour to depend solely on her Head who is in heaven.

While, at Rome, Luther's condemnation was urged forward with so much violence that an humble priest, living in one of the simple towns of Helvetia, and who had never held any communication with the reformer, was deeply affected at the thought of the blow impending over him; and, while the friends of the Wittenberg doctor trembled and remained silent, this child of the Swiss mountains resolved to employ every

means in his power to arrest the formidable bull. His name was Ulrich Zwingle. William des Faucons, secretary to the pope's legate in Switzerland and who, in the legate's absence, was intrusted with the affairs of Rome, was his friend.

"So long as I live," had said the nuncio ad interim to him a few days before, "you may count on my doing all that can be expected from a true friend." The Helvetian priest, trusting to this assurance, went to the nuncio's office (such at least is the conclusion we draw from one of his letters). He had no fear on his own part of the dangers to which the evangelical faith exposed him; he knew that a disciple of Christ should always be ready to lay down his life. "All that I ask of Christ for myself," said he to a friend to whose bosom he confided his anxiety about Luther, "is, that I may endure with the heart of a man the evils that await me. I am a vessel of clay in His hands; let Him dash me in pieces or strengthen me, as seemeth good to Him." But the Swiss evangelist feared for the Christian Church, if so formidable a blow should strike the reformer. He endeavored to

persuade the representative of Rome to enlighten the pope, and to employ all the means in his power to prevent Luther's excommunication. "The dignity of the holy see itself is interested in this," said Zwingle, "for if matters should come to such a point, Germany, overflowing with enthusiasm for the Gospel and for the doctor who preaches it, will despise the pope and his anathemas." This intervention proved of no effect: it would appear also that even at the time it was made, the blow had been already struck. Such was the first occasion in which the paths of the Saxon doctor and of the Swiss priest met. We shall again find the latter in the course of this history, and see him growing up and increasing to a lofty stature in the Church of the Lord.

Luther's condemnation being once resolved upon, new difficulties were raised in the consistory. The theologians were of opinion that the fulmination should be issued immediately; the lawyers, on the contrary, that it should be preceded by a summons. "Was not Adam first summoned?" said they to their theological colleagues; "so too

was Cain: Where is thy brother Abel, demanded the Almighty." To these singular arguments drawn from the Holy Scriptures the canonists added motives derived from the natural law: "The evidence of a crime," said they, "cannot deprive a criminal of his right of defense." It is pleasing to find these principles of justice in a Roman assembly. But these scruples were not to the taste of the divines in the assembly, who, instigated by passion, thought only of going immediately to work. One man in particular then came forward whose opinions must of necessity have had great influence: this was De Vio, cardinal Cajetan, still laboring under extreme vexation at his defeat in Augsburg, and the little honor or profit he had derived from his German mission. De Vio, who had returned to Rome in ill health, was carried to the assembly on his couch. He would not miss this paltry triumph, which afforded him some little consolation. Although defeated at Augsburg, he desired to take part at Rome in condemning this indomitable monk, before whom he had witnessed the failure of all his learning, skill, and authority. Luther was not there to reply: De Vio thought

himself invincible. “I have seen enough to know,” said he, “that if the Germans are not kept under by fire and sword, they will entirely throw off the yoke of the Roman Church.” Such a declaration from Cajetan could not fail to have great weight. The cardinal was avenged of his defeat and of the contempt of Germany. A final conference, which Eck attended, was held in the pope’s presence at his villa of Malliano. On the 15th of June the Sacred College decided on the condemnation, and sanctioned the famous bull.

“Arise, O Lord!” said the Roman pontiff, speaking at this solemn moment as God’s vicegerent and head of the Church, “arise, judge thy cause, and call to mind the opprobrium which madmen continually heap on thee! Arise, O Peter; remember thy Holy Roman Church, mother of all churches, and queen of the faith!

Arise, O Paul, for behold a new Porphyry attacks thy doctrines and the holy popes, our predecessors. Lastly, arise, ye assembly of saints, the holy Church of God, and intercede with the

Almighty!” The pope then proceeds to quote from Luther’s works forty-one pernicious, scandalous, and poisonous propositions, in which the latter set forth the holy doctrines of the Gospel. The following propositions are included in the list: — “To deny that sin remains in the child after baptism, is to trample under foot both Saint Paul and our Lord Jesus Christ.” “A new life is the best and sublimest penance.” “To burn heretics is contrary to the will of the Holy Ghost,” etc. etc.

“So soon as this bull shall be published,” continues the pope, “the bishops shall make diligent search after the writings of Martin Luther that contain these errors, and burn them publicly and solemnly in the presence of the clergy and laity. As for Martin himself, what have we not done? Imitating the longsuffering of God Almighty, we are still ready to receive him again into the bosom of the Church, and we grant him sixty days in which to forward us his recantation in a paper, sealed by two prelates; or else, which would be far more agreeable to us, for him to come to Rome in person, in order that no one may

entertain any doubts of his obedience.

Meanwhile, and from this very moment, he must give up preaching, teaching, and writing, and commit his works to the flames. And if he does not retract in the space of sixty days, we by these presents condemn both him and his adherents as open and obstinate heretics." The pope then pronounces a number of excommunications, maledictions, and interdicts, against Luther and his partisans, with orders to seize their persons and send them to Rome. We may easily conceive what would have become of these noble-minded confessors of the Gospel in the papal dungeons.

Thus was the tempest gathering over Luther's head. It might have been imagined, after the affair of Reuchlin, that the court of Rome would no longer make common cause with the Dominicans and the Inquisition. But now the latter had the upper hand, and the ancient alliance was solemnly renewed. The bull was published; and for centuries Rome had not pronounced a sentence of condemnation that her arm had not followed up

with death. This murderous message was about to leave the Seven Hills, and reach the Saxon monk in his cell. The moment was aptly chosen. It might be supposed that the new emperor, who had so many reasons for courting the pope’s friendship, would be eager to deserve it by sacrificing to him an obscure monk. Already Leo X, the cardinals, nay all Rome, exulted in their victory, and fancied they saw their enemy at their feet.

Chapter 5

Wittenberg

While the inhabitants of the eternal city were thus agitated, more tranquil scenes were passing at Wittenberg. Melancthon was there diffusing a mild but brilliant light. From fifteen hundred to two thousand auditors, collecting from Germany, England, the Low Countries, France, Italy, Hungary, and Greece, were often assembled around him. He was twentyfour years of age, and had not entered the ecclesiastical state. There were none in Wittenberg who were not delighted to receive the visits of this young professor, at once so learned and so amiable. Foreign universities, Ingolstadt in particular, desired to attract him within their walls. His Wittenberg friends were eager to retain him among them by the ties of marriage. Although Luther wished that his dear friend Philip might find a consort, he openly declared that he would not be his adviser in this matter.

Others took this task upon themselves. The young doctor frequented, in particular, the house of the burgomaster Krapp, who belonged to an ancient family. Krapp had a daughter named Catherine, a woman of mild character and great sensibility. Melancthon's friends urged him to demand her in marriage; but the young scholar was absorbed in his books, and would hear no mention of anything besides. His Greek authors and his Testament were his delight. The arguments of his friends he met with other arguments. At length they extorted his consent. All the preliminary steps were arranged, and Catherine was given him to wife. He received her very coldly, and said with a sigh: "It is God's will! I must renounce my studies and my pleasures to comply with the wishes of my friends." He appreciated, however, Catherine's good qualities. "The young woman," said he, "has just such a character and education as I should have asked of God: dexia o theos techmaizoito. Certainly she deserves a better husband." Matters were settled in the month of August; the betrothal took place on the 25th of September, and at the end of November the wedding was celebrated. Old

John Luther with his wife and daughters visited Wittenberg on this occasion. Many learned men and people of note were present at the nuptials.

The young bride felt as much affection as the young professor gave evidence coldness. Always anxious about her husband, Catherine grew alarmed at the least prospect of any danger that threatened her dear partner. Whenever Melancthon proposed taking any step of such a nature as to compromise himself, she overwhelmed him with entreaties to renounce it. “I was compelled,” wrote Melancthon on one such occasion, “to give way to her weakness.....such is our lot.” How many infidelities in the Church may have had a similar origin! Perhaps we should ascribe to Catherine’s influence the timidity and fears with which her husband has so often been reproached. Catherine was an affectionate mother as well as loving wife. She was liberal in her alms to the poor. “O God! do not abandon me in my old age, when my hair begins to turn gray!” such was the daily prayer of this pious and timid woman. Melancthon was soon conquered by his wife’s affection. When he had

once tasted the joys of domestic life, he felt all their sweetness: he was formed for such pleasures.

Nowhere did he feel himself happier than with Catherine and his children.

A French traveler one day finding “the master of Germany” rocking his child’s cradle with one hand, and holding a book in the other, started back with surprise. But Melancthon, without being disconcerted, explained to him with so much warmth the value of children in the eyes of God, that the stranger quitted the house wiser (to use his own words) than he had entered it.

Melancthon’s marriage gave a domestic circle to the Reformation. There was from this time one house in Wittenberg always open to those who were inspired by the new life. The concourse of strangers was immense.

They came to Melancthon on a thousand different matters; and the established regulations of his household enjoined him to refuse nothing to

any one. The young professor was extremely disinterested whenever good was to be done. When all his money was spent, he would secretly carry his plate to some merchant, caring little about depriving himself of it, since it gave him wherewithal to comfort the distressed. “Accordingly it would have been impossible for him to provide for the wants of himself and family,” says his friend Camerarius, “if a Divine and secret blessing had not from time to time furnished him the means.” His good nature was extreme. He possessed several ancient gold and silver medals, remarkable for their inscriptions and figures. He showed them one day to a stranger who called upon him. “Take any one you like,” said Melancthon. — “I should like them all,” replied the stranger. I confess (says Philip) that this unreasonable request displeased me a little at first; I nevertheless gave them to him. There was in Melancthon’s writings a perfume of antiquity, which did not however prevent the sweet savor of Christ from exhaling from every part, while it communicated to them an inexpressible charm. There is not one of his letters addressed to his

friends in which we are not reminded in the most natural manner of the wisdom of Homer, Plato, Cicero, and Pliny, Christ ever remaining his Master and his God. Spalatin had asked him the meaning of this expression of Jesus Christ, Without me ye can do nothing (John 15:5). Melancthon referred him to Luther. “Cur agam gestum, spectante Roscio? to use Cicero’s words,” said he. He then continues: “This passage signifies that we must be absorbed in Christ, so that we ourselves no longer act, but Christ lives in us. As the Divine nature was incorporated with the human in the person of Christ, so man must be incorporated with Jesus Christ by faith.” The illustrious scholar generally retired to rest shortly after supper. At two or three o’clock in the morning he was again at his studies. It was during these early hours that his best works were written. His manuscripts usually lay on the table exposed to the view of every visiter, so that he was robbed of several. When he had invited any of his friends to his house, he used to beg one of them to read before sitting down to table some small composition in prose or verse. He always took some young men with him during his

journeys. He conversed with them in a manner at once amusing and instructive. If the conversation languished, each of them had to recite in turn passages extracted from the ancient poets. He made frequent use of irony, tempering it, however, with great mildness. “He scratches and bites,” said he of himself, “and yet he does no harm.” Learning was his passion. The great object of his life was to diffuse literature and knowledge. Let us not forget that in his estimation the Holy Scriptures ranked far above the writings of pagan authors. “I apply myself solely to one thing,” said he, “the defense of letters. By our example we 518 must excite youth to the admiration of learning, and induce them to live it for its own sake, and not for the advantage that may be derived from it. The destruction of learning brings with it the ruin of everything that is good: religion, morals, Divine and human things. The better a man is, the greater his ardor in the preservation of learning; for he knows that of all plagues, ignorance is the most pernicious.” Some time after his marriage, Melancthon, in company with Camerarius and other friends, made a journey to Bretten in the Palatinate, to visit his beloved

mother. As soon as he caught sight of his birthplace, he got off his horse, fell on his knees, and returned thanks to God for having permitted him to see it once more. Margaret almost fainted with joy as she embraced her son. She wished him to stay at Bretten, and begged him earnestly to adhere to the faith of his fathers. Melancthon excused himself in this respect, but with great delicacy, lest he should wound his mother's feelings. He had much difficulty in leaving her again; and whenever a traveler brought him news from his natal city, he was as delighted as if he had again returned (to use his own words) to the joys of his childhood. Such was the private life of one of the greatest instruments of the religious Revolution of the sixteenth century.

A disturbance, however, occurred to trouble these domestic scenes and the studious activity of Wittenberg. The students came to blows with the citizens. The rector displayed great weakness. We may imagine what was Melancthon's sorrow at beholding the excesses committed by these disciples of learning. Luther was indignant: he was

far from desiring to gain popularity by an unbecoming conciliation. The opprobrium these disorders reflected on the university pierced him to the heart. He went into the pulpit, and preached forcibly against these seditions, calling upon both parties to submit to the magistrates. His sermon occasioned great irritation: “Satan,” said he in one of his letters, “being unable to attack us from without, desires to injure us from within. I do not fear him; but I fear lest God’s anger should fall upon us, for not having fully received His Word. These last three years I have been thrice exposed to great danger: At Augsburg in 1518, at Leipsic in 1519, and now in 1520 at Wittenberg. It is neither by wisdom nor by arms that the renovation of the Church will be accomplished, but by humble prayer and a bold faith, that puts Christ on our side. My dear friend, unite thy prayers with mine, that the evil spirit may not use this small spark to kindle a great conflagration.”

Chapter 6

The Gospel in Italy

But more terrible combats awaited Luther. Rome was brandishing the sword with which she was about to strike the Gospel. The rumor of the condemnation that was about to fall upon him, far from dispiriting the reformer, augmented his courage. He manifested no anxiety to parry the blows of this haughty power. It is by inflicting more terrible blows himself that he will neutralize those of his adversaries. While the transalpine assemblies are thundering out anathemas against him, he will bear the sword of the Word into the midst of the Italian people. Letters from Venice spoke of the favor with which Luther's sentiments were received there. He burnt with desire to send the Gospel across the Alps.

Evangelists were wanted to carry it thither. "I wish," said he, "that we had living books, that is, preachers, and that we could multiply and protect them everywhere, that they might convey to the

people a knowledge of holy things. The prince could not undertake a more glorious task. If the people of Italy should receive the truth, our cause would then be impregnable.” It does not appear that Luther’s project was realized. In later years, it is true, evangelical men, even Calvin himself, sojourned for a short period in Italy; but for the present Luther’s designs were not carried out. He had addressed one of the mighty princes of the world: if he had appealed to men of humble rank, but full of zeal for the kingdom of God, the result might have been different. At that period, the idea generally prevailed, that everything should be done by governments, and the association of simple individuals, — that power which is now effecting such great things in Christendom, — was almost unknown.

If Luther did not succeed in his projects for propagating the truth in distant countries, he was only the more zealous in announcing it himself. It was at this time that he preached his sermon on the Mass at Wittenberg.

In this discourse he inveighs against the numerous sects of the Romish Church, and reproaches it, with reason, for its want of unity. “The multiplicity of spiritual laws,” say he, “has filled the world with sects and divisions. Priests, monks, and laymen have come to hate each other more than the Christians hate the Turks. What do I say? Priests against priests, and monks against monks, are deadly enemies. Each one is attached to his own sect, and despises all others. The unity and charity of Christ are at an end.” He next attacks the doctrine that the mass is a sacrifice, and has some virtue in itself. “What is most precious in every sacrament, and consequently in the eucharist,” says he, “is the promises and the Word of God. Without faith in this Word and these promises, the sacrament is dead; it is a body without a soul, a cup without wine, a purse without money, a type without fulfillment, a letter without spirit, a casket without jewels, a scabbard without a sword.” Luther’s voice was not, however, confined to Wittenberg, and if he did not find missionaries to bear his instructions to distant lands, God had provided a missionary of a new kind. The printing-

press was the successor of the Evangelists. This was the breaching-battery employed against the Roman fortress. Luther had prepared a mine the explosion of which shook the edifice of Rome to its lowest foundations. This was the publication of his famous book on the Babylonish Captivity of the Church, which appeared on the 6th of October 1520. Never did man, in so critical a position, display greater courage.

In this work he first sets forth with haughty irony all the advantages for which he is indebted to his enemies: — “Whether I will it or not,” said he, “I become wiser every day, urged on as I am by so many illustrious masters. Two years ago, I attacked indulgences, but with so much indecision and fear, that I am now ashamed of it. It is not, however, to be wondered at, for I was alone when I set this stone rolling.” He thanks Prierio, Eck, Emser, and his other adversaries: “I denied,” continued he, “that the papacy was of Divine origin, but I granted that it was of human right. Now, after reading all the subtleties on which these gentry have set up their idol, I know that the papacy is none other than

the kingdom of Babylon, and the violence of Nimrod the mighty hunter. I therefore beseech all my friends and all the booksellers to burn the books that I have written on this subject, and to substitute this one proposition in their place: The papacy is a general chase led by the Roman bishop, to catch and destroy souls." Luther next proceeds to attack the prevailing errors on the sacraments, monastic vows, etc. He reduces the seven sacraments of the Church to three; Baptism, Penance, and the Lord's Supper. After explaining the true nature of this Supper, he passes on to baptism; and it is here especially that he lays down the excellence of faith, and vigorously attacks Rome.

"God," says he, "has preserved this sacrament alone free from human traditions. God has said: He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.

This promise of God should be preferred to the glory of all works, vows, satisfactions, indulgences, and all inventions of man. Now, on this promise, received by faith, depends our

salvation. If we believe, our hearts are strengthened by the Divine promise; and though the believer should be forsaken of all, this promise in which he believes will never forsake him.

With it, he will resist the adversary who assaults his soul, and be prepared to meet death, and stand before the judgment seat of God. It will be his consolation in all his trials to say: God's promises never deceive; of their truth I received a pledge at my baptism; if God is for me, who shall be against me? Oh, how rich is the baptized Christian! Nothing can destroy him except he refuse to believe.

"Perhaps to what I have said on the necessity of faith, the baptism of little children may be objected. But as the Word of God is mighty to change the heart of a wicked man, who is not less deaf nor less helpless than an infant, so the prayers of the Church, to which all things are possible, change the little child, by the faith it pleases God to place in his heart, and thus purifies and renews it." We state Luther's doctrine upon Baptism without

pretending to approve it. The very scriptural idea that no sacrament can be useful without faith, led Luther to declare “that children themselves believe in baptism, that they have a faith peculiar to them;” and when it was objected to him that not having reason they could not have faith, he replied, “What has reason to do with faith and with the Word of God? Does it not on the contrary resist them? No man can attain to faith unless he becomes a fool, without reason, without intelligence, and like a little child.” We must not be afraid to point out errors in the leaders of the Reformation: we do not pay them honors like those which Rome pays to its saints; we defend neither Calvin nor Luther, but only Christ and his word.

After having thus explained the doctrine of baptism, Luther wields it as a weapon against the papacy. In fact, if the Christian finds all his salvation in the renewal of his baptism by faith, what need has he of the Romish ordinances?

“For this reason, I declare,” says Luther, “that neither pope, nor bishop, nor any man living, has

authority to impose the least thing on a Christian, without his own consent. All that is done without it is an act of tyranny. We are free from all men. The vow that we made at our baptism is sufficient of itself, and more than we can ever fulfill. All other vows then, may be abolished. Let every man who enters the priesthood or any religious order be assured, that the works of a monk or of a priest differ in no respect before God from those of a peasant who tills his fields, or of a woman who manages her house. God estimates all things by the standard of faith. And it often happens that the simple labor of a serving man or maiden is more acceptable to God than the fasts and works of a monk, because the latter are void of faith.....Christians are God's true people, led captive to Babylon, and there stripped of what they had acquired by their baptism." Such were the weapons by which the religious revolution we are relating was effected. First, the necessity of faith was re-established, and then the reformers employed it as a weapon to dash to atoms every superstition. It is with this power of God, which removes mountains, that they attacked so many

errors. These words of Luther, and many others like them, circulating through cities, convents, and rural districts, were the leaven that leavened the whole mass.

Luther terminates this famous writing on the Captivity of Babylon with these words: — “I hear that new papal excommunications are about to be fabricated against me. If it be true, this present book must be considered as part of my future recantation. The remainder will soon follow, to prove my obedience, and the complete work will form, with Christ’s aid, such a whole as Rome has never heard or seen the like.”

Chapter 7

Fresh Negotiations

After such a publication, all hope of reconciliation between Luther and the pope must of necessity have vanished. The incompatibility of the reformer's faith with the doctrines of the Church must have struck the least discerning; but precisely at that very time fresh negotiations had been opened. Five weeks before the publication of the Captivity of Babylon, at the end of August 1520, the general chapter of the Augustine monks was held at Eisleben. The venerable Staupitz there resigned the general vicarship of the order, and it was conferred on Wenceslas Link, the same who had accompanied Luther to Augsburg. The indefatigable Miltitz suddenly arrived in the midst of the proceedings. He was ardently desirous of reconciling Luther with the pope. His vanity, his avarice, and above all, his jealousy and hatred, were deeply interested in this result. Eck and his boastings annoyed him; he knew that the Ingolstadt doctor had been decrying him at Rome, and he

would have made every sacrifice to baffle, by a peace that should be promptly concluded, the schemes of this importunate rival. The interests of religion were mere secondary matters in his eyes. One day, as he relates, he was dining with the Bishop of Leissen.

The guests had already made pretty copious libations, when a new work of Luther’s was laid before them. It was opened and read; the bishop grew angry; the official swore; but Miltitz burst into a hearty laugh. He dealt with the Reformation as a man of the world; Eck as a theologian.

Aroused by the arrival of Dr. Eck, Miltitz addressed the chapter of the Augustines in a speech, delivered with a strong Italian accent, thinking thus to impose on his simple fellow-countrymen. “The whole Augustine order,” said he, “is compromised in this affair. Show me the means of restraining Luther.” — “We have nothing to do with the doctor,” replied the fathers, “and cannot give you advice.” They relied no doubt on the release from the obligations to his order which

Staupitz had given Luther at Augsburg. Miltitz persisted: “Let a deputation from this venerable chapter wait upon Luther, and entreat him to write to the pope, assuring him that he has never plotted against his person. That will be sufficient to put an end to the matter.” The chapter complied with the nuncio’s demand, and commissioned, no doubt at his own request, the former vicar-general and his successor (Staupitz and Link) to speak to Luther. This deputation immediately set out for Wittenberg, bearing a letter from Miltitz to the doctor, filled with expressions of the greatest respect. “There is no time to lose,” said he; “the thunder-storm, already gathering over the reformer’s head, will soon burst forth; and then all will be over.” Neither Luther nor the deputies who shared in his sentiments expected any success from a letter to the pope. But that was an additional reason for not refusing to write one. Such a letter could only be a mere matter of form, which would set the justice of Luther’s cause in a still stronger light.

“This Italianized Saxon (Miltitz),” thought

Luther, “is no doubt looking to his own private interest in making the request. Well, then, let it be so! I will write, in conformity with the truth, that I have never entertained any designs against the pope’s person. I must be on my guard against attacking the see of Rome itself too violently. Yet I will sprinkle it with its own salt.” But not long after, the doctor was informed of the arrival of the bull in Germany; on the 3rd of October, he told Spalatin that he would not write to the pope, and on the 6th of the same month, he published his book on the Captivity of Babylon. Miltitz was not even yet discouraged. The desire of humbling Eck made him believe in impossibilities. On the 2nd of October, he had written to the elector full of hope: “All will go on well; but, for the love of God, do not delay any longer to pay me the pension that you and your brother have given me these several years past. I require money to gain new friends at Rome. Write to the pope, pay homage to the young cardinals, the relations of his holiness, in gold and silver pieces from the electoral mint, and add to them a few for me also, for I have been robbed of those that you gave me.” Even after Luther had

been informed of the bull, the intriguing Miltitz was not discouraged. He requested to have a conference with Luther at Lichtemberg. The elector ordered the latter to go there; but his friends, and above all, the affectionate Melancthon, opposed it. “What!” thought they; “accept a conference with the nuncio in so distant a place, at the very moment when the bull is to appear which commands Luther to be seized and carried to Rome! Is it not clear that, as Dr. Eck is unable to approach the reformer on account of the open manner in which he has shown his hatred, the crafty chamberlain has taken upon himself to catch Luther in his toils?” These fears had no power to stop the Wittenberg doctor. The prince has commanded, and he will obey, “I am setting out for Lichtemberg,” he wrote to the chaplain on the 11th of October; “pray for me.” His friends would not abandon him. Towards evening of the same day, he entered Lichtemberg on horseback, accompanied by thirty cavaliers, among whom was Melancthon. The papal nuncio arrived about the same time, with a train of four persons. Was not this moderate escort a mere trick to inspire confidence in Luther and his friends?

Miltitz was very pressing in his solicitations, assuring Luther that the blame would be thrown on Eck and his foolish vaunting, and that all would be concluded to the satisfaction of both parties. “Well then!” replied Luther, “I offer to keep silence henceforward, provided my adversaries are silent likewise. For the sake of peace, I will do everything in my power.” Miltitz was filled with joy. He accompanied Luther as far as Wittenberg.

The reformer and the nuncio entered side by side into that city which Doctor Eck was already approaching, presenting with a threatening hand the formidable bull that was intended to crush the Reformation. “We shall bring this business to a happy conclusion,” wrote Miltitz to the elector immediately; “thank the pope for the rose, and at the same time send forty or fifty florins to the Cardinal Quatuor Sanctorum.” Luther had now to fulfill his promise of writing to the pope. Before bidding Rome farewell for ever, he was desirous of proclaiming to her once more some important and salutary truths. Many readers, from ignorance of

the sentiments that animated the writer, will consider his letter as a caustic writing, a bitter and insolent satire.

All the evils that afflicted Christendom he sincerely ascribed to Rome: on this ground, his language cannot be regarded as insolent, but as containing the most solemn warnings. The greater his affection for Leo, and the greater his love for the Church of Christ, the more he desires to lay bare the extent of its wound. The energy of his expressions is a scale by which to measure the energy of his affections. The moment is come for striking a decisive blow. We may almost imagine we see a prophet going round the city for the last time, reproaching it with its abominations, revealing the judgments of the Almighty, and calling out "Yet a few days more!" The following is Luther's letter: — "To the most holy Father in God, Leo X., Pope at Rome, be all health in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

"From the midst of the violent battle which for three years I have been fighting against dissolute

men, I cannot hinder myself from sometimes looking towards you, O Leo, most holy Father in God!

And although the madness of your impious flatterers has constrained me to appeal from your judgment to a future council, my heart has never been alienated from your holiness, and I have never ceased praying constantly and with deep groaning for your prosperity and for that of your pontificate. It is true that I have attacked certain antichristian doctrines, and have inflicted a deep wound upon my adversaries, because of their impiety. I do not repent of this, for I have the example of Christ before me. What is the use of salt if it has lost its pungency; or of the edge of the sword, if it cuts not? Cursed be the man who does the Lord’s work coldly! Most excellent Leo, far from ever having entertained an evil thought in your respect, I wish you the most precious blessings for eternity. I have done but one thing — upheld the Word of truth. I am ready to submit to you in every thing; but as for this Word, I will not — I cannot abandon it. He who thinks differently from me, thinks

erroneously.

“It is true that I have attacked the court of Rome; but neither you nor any man on earth can deny that it is more corrupt than Sodom and Gomorrah; and that the impiety prevailing there is past all hope of cure. Yes! I have been filled with horror at seeing that under your name the poor people of Christ have been made a sport of. This I opposed, and I will oppose it again; not that I imagine I shall be able, despite the opposition of flatterers, to prosper in anything connected with this Babylon, which is confusion itself; but I owe it to my brethren, in order that some may escape, if possible, from these terrible scourges.

“You are aware that Rome for many years past has inundated the world with all that could destroy both body and soul. The Church of Rome, once the foremost in sanctity, is become the most licentious den of robbers, the most shameless of all brothels, the kingdom of sin, of death, and of hell, which Antichrist himself, if he were to appear, could not increase in wickedness. All this is clearer than the

sun at noonday.

“And yet, O Leo! you sit like a lamb in the midst of wolves, like Daniel in the lions’ den! What can you do alone against such monsters? Perhaps there are three or four cardinals who combine learning and virtue. But what are they against so great a number!

You would all die of poison, before being able to make trial of any remedy. The fate of the court of Rome is decreed; God’s wrath is upon it, and will consume it. It hates good advice, dreads reform, will not mitigate the fury of its impiety, and thus deserves that men should speak of this city as of its mother: We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her. It was for you and your cardinals to have applied the remedy; but the sick man mocks the physician, and the horse will not obey the rein.

“Full of affection for you, most excellent Leo, I have always regretted that you, who are worthy of better times, should have been raised to the

pontificate in such days as these. Rome merits you not, nor those who resemble you; she deserves to have Satan himself for her king. So true it is that he reigns more than you in that Babylon. Would to God that, laying aside that glory which your enemies so loudly extol, you would exchange it for some small living, or would support yourself on your paternal inheritance; for none but Iscariots deserve such honor.....O my dear Leo, of what use are you in this Roman court, except that the basest men employ your name and power to ruin fortunes, destroy souls, multiply crimes, oppress the faith, the truth, and the whole Church of God? O Leo! you are the most unhappy of men, and you sit on the most dangerous of thrones! I tell you the truth because I mean you well.

“Is it not true that under the spreading firmament of heaven there is nothing more corrupt or more detestable than the Romish court? It infinitely exceeds the Turks in vices and corruption. Once it was the gate of heaven, now it is the mouth of hell; a mouth which the wrath of God keeps open so wide, that on witnessing the

unhappy people rushing into it, I cannot but utter a warning cry, as in a tempest, that some at least may be saved from the terrible gulf.

“Behold, O Leo, my Father! why I have inveighed against this death-dealing see. Far from rising up against your person, I thought I was laboring for your safety, by valiantly attacking that prison, or rather that hell, in which you are shut up. To inflict all possible mischief on the court of Rome, is performing your duty. To cover it with shame, is to do Christ honor; in a word, to be a Christian is not to be a Roman.

“Yet finding that by succoring the see of Rome I lost both my labor and my pains, I transmitted to it this writing of divorcement, and said Farewell: Rome! He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still! and I devoted myself to the tranquil and solitary study of the Holy Scripture. Then Satan opened his eyes, and awoke his servant John Eck, a great adversary of Jesus Christ, in order to challenge me again to the lists. He was desirous of establishing, not the

primacy of Saint Peter, but his own, and for that purpose to lead the conquered Luther in his triumphal train. His be the blame for all the disgrace with which the see of Rome is covered." Luther relates his communications with De Vio, Miltitz, and Eck; he then continues: "Now then, I come to you, most holy Father, and, prostrate at your feet, I beseech you to curb, if that be possible, the enemies of peace. But I cannot retract my doctrine. I cannot permit any rules of interpretation to be imposed on the Scriptures. The Word of God, which is the fountain which all true liberty flows, must not be bound. "O Leo! my Father! listen not to those flattering sirens who would persuade you that you are not a mere man, but a demi-god, and can command and require whatever you please. You are the servant of servants, and the place where you are seated is the most dangerous and miserable of all. Believe those who depreciate you, and not those who extol you. I am perhaps too bold in presuming to teach so exalted a majesty, which ought to instruct all men. But I see the dangers that surround you at Rome; I see you driven to and fro, like the waves of the sea in a storm. Charity urges

me, and it is my duty to utter a cry of warning and of safety.

“That I may not appear empty-handed before your holiness, I present you a small book which I have dedicated to you, and which will inform you of the subjects on which should be engaged, if your parasites permitted me. It is a little matter, if its size be considered; but a great one, if we regard its contents; for the sum of the christian life is therein contained. I am poor, and have nothing else to offer you; besides, have you need of any other than spiritual gifts? I commend myself to your holiness, whom may the Lord Jesus preserve for ever! Amen!” The little book which Luther presented to the pope was his discourse on Christian Liberty, in which the reformer demonstrates incontrovertibly, how, without infringing the liberty given by faith, a Christian may submit to all external ordinances in a spirit of liberty and charity. Two truths serve as a foundation to the whole argument: “The Christian is free and master in all things. The Christian is in bondage and a servant in all and to all. He is free and a master by faith; he is a servant and a slave by

love.” He first explains the power of faith to make a Christian free.

“Faith unites the soul to Christ, as a wife to her husband,” says Luther to the pope. “All that Christ has, becomes the property of the believing soul; all that the soul has, becomes the property of Christ. Christ possesses every blessing and eternal salvation: they are henceforward the property of the soul. The soul possesses every vice and sin: they become henceforth the property of Christ.

It is then the blessed exchange commences: Christ, who is God and man, Christ who has never sinned, and whose holiness is immaculate, Christ the Almighty and Everlasting, appropriating by his nuptial ring, that is, by faith, all the sins of the believer’s soul, these sins are swallowed up and lost in Him; for there is no sin that can stand before His infinite righteousness. Thus, by means of faith, the soul is delivered from every sin, and clothed with the eternal righteousness of her husband, Jesus Christ. Blessed union! the rich, noble, and holy spouse, Jesus Christ, unites in marriage with

that poor, guilty, and despised wife, delivers her from every ill, and adorns her with the most costly blessings..... Christ, a priest and king, shares this honor and glory with every Christian.

The Christian is a king, and consequently possesses all things; he is a priest, and consequently possesses God. And it is faith, and not works, that brings him to such honor. The Christian is free of tall things, above all things, faith giving him abundantly of every thing." In the second part of his discourse, Luther gives another view of the truth.

"Although the Christian is thus made free, he voluntarily becomes a slave, to act towards his brethren as God has acted towards him through Jesus Christ. I desire (says he) to serve freely, joyfully, and gratuitously, a Father who has thus lavished upon me all the abundance of his blessings: I wish to become all things for my neighbor, as Christ has become all things for me." — "From faith," continues Luther, "proceeds the love of God; from love proceeds a life full of

liberty, charity, and joy. Oh! how noble and elevated is the christian life! But, alas! no one knows it, no one preaches it. By faith the Christian ascends to God; by love, he descends even to man, and yet he abides ever with God. This is true liberty — a liberty which surpasses all others as much as the heavens are above the earth.” Such is the work with which Luther accompanied his letter to Leo.

Chapter 8

The Bull in Germany

While the reformer was thus addressing the Roman pontiff for the last time, the bull which anathematized him was already in the hands of the chiefs of the German Church, and at the threshold of Luther's dwellingplace.

It would appear that no doubts were entertained at Rome of the success of the step just taken against the Reformation. The pope had commissioned two high functionaries of his court, Caraccioli and Aleander, to bear it to the Archbishop of Mentz, desiring him to see it put in execution. But Eck himself appeared in Saxony as the herald and agent of the great pontifical work.

The choice had long been doubtful. "Eck," wrote an inhabitant of Rome about this time, "was peculiarly adapted for this mission by his impudence, his dissimulation, his lies, his flattery, and other vices, that are held in high esteem at

Rome: but his fondness for drinking, a failing towards which the Italians entertain a great aversion, was rather against his election." The influence, however, of his patron Fugger, "the king of crowns," prevailed in the end. This bad habit was even metamorphosed into a virtue in the ease of Dr. Eck. "He is just the man we want," said many of the Romans; "for these drunken Germans, what can be better than a drunken legate? Their temerity can only be checked by an equal degree of temerity." Further, it was whispered about that no man of sincerity and good sense would understand such a mission; and that even could such a man be found, the magnitude of the danger would soon make him abandon the place. The idea of nominating Aleander as Dr. Eck's colleague seemed most excellent. "A worthy pair of ambassadors," said some; "both are admirably suited for this work, and perfectly matched in effrontery, impudence, and debauchery." The doctor of Ingolstadt had felt more than any other man the force of Luther's attack; he had seen the danger, and stretched forth his hand to steady the tottering edifice of Rome. He was, in his own

opinion, the Atlas destined to bear on his sturdy shoulders the ancient Roman world now threatening to fall to ruins. Proud of the success of his journey to Rome, — proud of the commission he had received from the sovereign pontiff, — proud of appearing in Germany with the new title of protonotary and pontifical nuncio, — proud of the bull he held in his hands, and which contained the condemnation of his indomitable rival, his present mission was a more magnificent triumph than all the victories he had gained in Hungary, Bavaria, Lombardy, and Saxony, and from which he had previously derived so much renown. But this pride was soon to be brought low. The pope, by confiding the publication of the bull to Eck, had committed a fault destined to destroy its effect. So great a distinction, accorded to a man not filling an elevated station in the Church, offended all sensible men. The bishops, accustomed to receive the bulls direct from the Roman pontiff, were displeased that this should be published in their dioceses by a nuncio created for the occasion. The nation, that had laughed at the pretended conqueror at Leipsic at the moment of his flight to Italy, was

astonished and indignant at seeing him recross the Alps, bearing the insignia of a papal nuncio, and furnished with power to crush her chosen men. Luther considered this judgment brought by his implacable opponent, as an act of personal revenge; this condemnation was in his idea (says Pallavicini) the treacherous dagger of a mortal enemy, and not the lawful axe of a Roman lictor. This paper was no longer regarded as the bull of the supreme pontiff, but as the bull of Doctor Eck. Thus the edge was blunted and weakened beforehand by the very man who had prepared it.

The Chancellor of Ingolstadt had made all haste to Saxony. ‘Twas there he had fought; ‘twas there he wished to publish his victory. He succeeded in posting up the bull at Meissen, Merseburg, and Brandenburg, towards the end of September. But in the first of these cities it was stuck up in a place where no one could read it, and the bishops of the three sees did not press its publication. Even his great protector, Duke George, forbade the council of Leipsic to make it generally known before receiving an order from the Bishop of Merseburg;

and this order did not come till the following year.

“These difficulties are merely for form’s sake,” thought John Eck at first; for everything in other respects seemed to smile upon him. Duke George himself sent him a gilt cup filled with ducats. Even Miltitz, who had hastened to Leipsic at the news of his rival’s presence, invited him to dinner. The two legates were boon companions, and Miltitz thought he could more effectually sound his rival over the bottle. “When he had drunk pretty freely, he began,” says the pope’s chamberlain, “to boast at a fine rate; he displayed his bull, and related how he intended bringing that scoundrel Martin to reason.” But erelong the Ingolstadt doctor observed that the wind was changing. A great alteration had taken place in Leipsic during the past year. On St. Michael’s day, some students posted up placards in ten different places, in which the new nuncio was sharply attacked. In alarm he fled to the cloister of St. Paul, in which Tetzel had already taken refuge, refused to see any one, and prevailed upon the rector to bring these youthful adversaries to account. But poor Eck gained little by this. The

students wrote a ballad upon him, which they sung in the streets; Eck heard it from his retreat. Upon this he lost all his courage; the formidable champion trembled in every limb. Each day he received threatening letters. One hundred and fifty students arrived from Wittenberg, boldly exclaiming against the papal envoy. The wretched apostolical nuncio could hold out no longer. “I have no wish to see him killed,” said Luther, “but I am desirous that his schemes should fail.” Eck quitted his asylum by night, escaped secretly from Leipsic, and went and hid himself at Coburg. Miltitz, who relates this, boasted of it more than the reformer. This triumph was not of long duration; all the conciliatory plans of the chamberlain failed, and he came to a melancholy end. Miltitz, being intoxicated, fell into the Rhine at Mentz, and was drowned.

Gradually, however, Eck’s courage revived. He repaired to Erfurth, whose theologians had given the Wittenberg doctor several proofs of their jealousy. He insisted that the bull should be published in this city; but the students seized the

copies, tore them in pieces, and flung the fragments into the river, saying: “Since it is a bull (a bubble), let it float!” “Now,” said Luther, when he was informed of this, “the pope’s paper is a real bull (bubble).” Eck did not dare to appear at Wittenberg; he sent the bull to the rector, threatening to destroy the university if he did not conform to it. At the same time he wrote to Duke John, Frederick’s brother and co-regent: “Do not misconstrue my proceedings,” said he; “for I am fighting on behalf of the faith, which costs me much care, toil, and money.” The Bishop of Brandenburg could not, even had he so wished, act in Wittenberg in his quality of ordinary; for the university was protected by its privileges. Luther and Carlstadt, both condemned by the bull, were invited to be present at the deliberations that took place on its contents.

The rector declared that as the bull was not accompanied by a letter from the pope, he would not publish it. The university already enjoyed in the surrounding countries a greater authority than the pontiff himself. Its declaration served as a model

for the elector’s government. Thus the spirit that was in Luther triumphed over the bull of Rome.

While this affair was thus violently agitating the public mind in Germany, a solemn voice was heard in another country of Europe. One man, foreseeing the immense schism that the papal bull would cause in the Church, stood forward to utter a serious warning and to defend the reformer. It was the same Swiss priest whom we have mentioned before, Ulrich Zwingle, who, without any relations of friendship with Luther, published a writing full of wisdom and dignity, — the first of his numerous works. A brotherly affection seemed to attract him towards the reformer of Wittenberg. “The piety of the pontiff,” said he, “calls upon him to sacrifice gladly all that he holds dearest, for the glory of Christ his king and the public peace of the Church. Nothing is more injurious to his dignity than his defending it by bribery or by terror. Before even Luther’s writings had been read, he was cried down among the people as a heretic, a schismatic, and as Antichrist himself. No one had given him warning, no one had refuted him; he begged for a discussion,

and they were content to condemn him. The bull that is now published against him displeases even those who honor the pope’s grandeur; for throughout it betrays signs of the impotent hatred of a few monks, and not those becoming the mildness of a pontiff, the vicar of a Savior full of compassion. All men acknowledge that the true doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ has greatly degenerated, and that we need a striking public revival of laws and morality. Look to all men of learning and virtue; the greater their sincerity, the stronger is their attachment to the evangelical truth, and the less are they scandalized at Luther’s writings. There is no one but confesses that these books have made him a better man, although perhaps they may contain passages that he does not approve of.

— Let men of pure doctrine and acknowledged probity be chosen; let those princes above all suspicion, the Emperor Charles, the King of England, and the King of Hungary, themselves appoint the arbitrators; let these men read Luther’s writings, hear him personally, and let their decision

be ratified! Nichesato e tou christou paideia chai aletheia!” This proposition emanating from the country of the Swiss led to no results. The great divorce must be accomplished; Christendom must be rent in twain; and even in its wounds will the remedy for all its ills be found.

Chapter 9

Luther’s Appeal to God

In truth, what signified all this resistance of students, rectors, and priests?

If the mighty hand of Charles unites with the pope’s, will they not crush these scholars and grammarians? Who shall withstand the power of the pontiff of Christendom, and of the Emperor of the West? The bolt is discharged; Luther is cut off from the Church; the Gospel seems lost. At this solemn moment, the reformer does not conceal from himself the perils that surround him. He casts his looks to heaven. He prepares to receive, as from the hand of the Lord, the blow that seems destined to destroy him.

His soul reposes at the foot of the throne of God. “What will happen?” said he. “I know not, and I care not to know, feeling sure that He who sitteth in heaven hath foreseen from all eternity the beginning, continuation, and end of all this affair.

Wherever the blow may reach me, I fear not. The leaf of a tree does not fall to the ground without the will of our Father. How much less we ourselves.....It is a little matter to die for the Word, since this Word, which was made flesh for us, died itself at first.

We shall arise with it, if we die with it, and passing where it has gone before, we shall arrive where it has arrived, and abide with it through all eternity." Sometimes, however, Luther cannot restrain the contempt inspired by the manoeuvers of his enemies; we then find in him that mixture of sublimity and irony which characterizes him. "I know nothing of Eck," said he, "except that he has arrived with a long beard, a long bull, and a long purse; but I laugh at his bull." On the 3rd of October he was informed of the papal brief. "It is come at last, this Roman bull," said he. "I despise and attack it as impious, false, and in every respect worthy of Eck. It is Christ himself who is condemned therein. No reasons are given in it: I am cited to Rome, not to be heard, but that I may eat my words. I shall treat it as a forgery, although

I believe it true. Oh, that Charles V would act like a man! and that for the love of 537 Christ he would attack these wicked spirits! I rejoice in having to bear such ills for the best of causes. Already I feel greater liberty in my heart; for at last I know that the pope is Antichrist, and that his throne is that of Satan himself." It was not in Saxony alone that the thunders of Rome had caused alarm. A tranquil family of Swabia, one that had remained neutral, found its peace suddenly disturbed. Bilibald Pirckheimer of Nuremberg, one of the most distinguished men of his day, early bereft of his beloved wife Crescentia, was attached by the closest ties of affection to his two young sisters, Charity, abbess of Saint Claire, and Clara, a nun in the same convent.

These two pious young women served God in this seclusion, and divided their time between study, the care of the poor, and meditation on eternal life. Bilibald, a statesman, found some relaxation from his public cares in the correspondence he kept up with them. They were learned, read Latin, and studied the Fathers; but

there was nothing they loved so much as the Holy Scriptures. They had never had any other instructor than their brother. Charity's letters bear the impress of a delicate and loving mind.

Full of the tenderest affection for Bilibald, she feared the least danger on his account. Pirckheimer, to encourage this timid creature, composed a dialogue between Charitas and Veritas (Charity and Truth), in which Veritas strives to give confidence to Charitas. Nothing could have been more touching, or better adapted to console a tender and anxious heart.

What must have been Charity's alarm when she heard it rumored that Bilibald's name was posted up under the pope's bull on the gates of the cathedrals beside that of Luther! In fact, Eck, impelled by blind fury, had associated with Luther six of the most distinguished men in Germany, Carlstadt, Feldkirchen, Egranus, who cared little about it, Adelmann, Pirckheimer, and his friend Spengler, whom the public functions with which they were invested rendered particularly sensible to

this indignity.

Great was the agitation in the convent of St. Claire. How could they endure Bilibald's shame? Nothing is so painful to relatives as trials of this nature. The danger was truly urgent. In vain did the city of Nuremberg, the Bishop of Bamberg, and even the Dukes of Bavaria intercede in favor of Spengler and Pirckheimer; these noble-minded men were compelled to humble themselves before Dr. Eck, who made them feel all the importance of a Roman protonotary, and compelled them to write a letter to the pope, in which they declared that they did not adhere to the doctrines of Luther, except so far as they were conformable with the christian faith. At the same time Adelmann, with whom Eck had once disputed, as he rose from table, after a discussion on the great question then filling every mind, was forced to appear before the bishop of Augsburg, and clear himself upon oath from all participation in the Lutheran heresy. Yet vengeance and anger proved bad counsellors to Eck. The names of Bilibald and of his friends brought discredit on the bull. The character of these

eminent men, and their numerous connections, served to increase the general irritation.

Luther at first pretended to doubt the authenticity of the bull. “I hear,” says he in the first of his writings on the subject, “that Eck has brought a new bull from Rome, which resembles him so much that it might be called Doctor Eck, — so full is it of falsehood and error. He would have us believe that it is the pope’s doing, while it is only a forgery.” After having set forth the reasons for his doubts, Luther concludes by saying: “I must see with my own eyes the lead, the seal, the strings, the clause, the signature of the bull, in fact the whole of it, before I value all these clamors even at a straw!” But no one doubted, not even Luther himself, that it really emanated from the pope. Germany waited to see what the reformer would do. Would he stand firm? All eyes were fixed on Wittenberg. Luther did not keep his contemporaries long in suspense. He replied with a terrible discharge of artillery, publishing on the 4th of November 1520 his treatise Against the Bull of Antichrist.

“What errors, what deceptions,” says he, “have crept among the poor people under the mantle of the Church and of the pretended infallibility of the pope! How many souls have thus been lost! how much blood spilt! how many murders committed! how many kingdoms devastated!.....

“I can pretty clearly distinguish,” says he ironically, a little further on, “between skill and malice, and I set no high value on a malice so unskillful. To burn books is so easy a matter that even children can do it; much more, then, the Holy Father and his doctors. It would be well for them to show greater ability than that which is required to burn books.....Besides, let them destroy my works! I desire nothing better; for all my wish has been to lead souls to the Bible, so that they might afterwards neglect my writings. Great God! if we had a knowledge of Scripture what need would there be of any books of mine?.....I am free, by the grace of God, and bulls neither console nor alarm me. My strength and my consolation are in a place where neither men nor devils can reach them.”

Luther’s tenth proposition, condemned by the pope, was thus drawn up: “No man’s sins are forgiven, unless he believes they are forgiven when the priest absolves him.” By condemning this, the pope denied that faith was necessary in the sacrament. “They pretend,” exclaims Luther, “that we must not believe our sins are forgiven when we receive absolution from the priest. And what then ought we to do?.....Listen, Christians, to this news from Rome.

Condemnation is pronounced against that article of faith which we profess when we say: ‘I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the forgiveness of sins.’ If I were certain that the pope had really issued this bull at Rome (and he had no doubt about it), and that it was not invented by Eck, that prince of liars, I should like to proclaim to all Christians that they ought to consider the pope as the real Antichrist spoken of in Scripture. And if he would not discontinue publicly to proscribe the faith of the Church, then.....let even the temporal sword resist him, rather than the Turk!.....For the Turk permits us to

believe, but the pope forbids it.” While Luther was speaking thus forcibly, his dangers were increasing. His enemies’ plan was to expel him from Wittenberg. If Luther and Wittenberg can be separated, Luther and Wittenberg would be ruined. One blow would thus free Rome both from the heretical doctor and the heretical university.

Duke George, the Bishop of Merseburg, and the Leipsic theologians secretly applied themselves to the task. When Luther heard of it, he said: “I place the whole matter in God’s hands.” These intrigues were not entirely ineffectual: Adrian, Hebrew professor at Wittenberg, suddenly turned against the doctor. Great strength of faith was required to bear up against the blow inflicted by the court of Rome. There are some characters that will go along with the truth only to a certain point. Such was Adrian.

Alarmed by this condemnation, he quitted Wittenberg, and repaired to Dr. Eck at Leipsic.

The bull was beginning to be carried into

execution. The voice of the pontiff of Christendom was not powerless. For ages, fire and sword had taught submission to his decrees. The burning piles were erected at his voice. Everything seemed to announce that a terrible catastrophe would shortly put an end to the daring revolt of this Augustine monk. In October 1520 Luther's books were taken away from all the booksellers' shops in Ingolstadt and put under seal. The Elector-archbishop of Mentz, moderate as he was, felt obliged to banish Ulrich of Hutten from his court, and to imprison his printer. The papal nuncios had besieged the youthful emperor: Charles declared that he would protect the old religion; and in some of his hereditary possessions scaffolds were erected on which the writings of the heretic were to be reduced to ashes. Princes of the Church and councilors of state were present at these autos-da-fe.

Eck behaved with insolence, in every quarter threatening the great and the learned, and "filling every thing with his smoke," as Erasmus says. "The pope," said Eck, "who has overthrown so

many counts and dukes, will know how to bring these wretched grammarians to their senses. We must tell the Emperor Charles himself: You are but a cobbler.” And his colleague Aleander, frowning like a schoolmaster who threatens his pupils with the rod, said to Erasmus: “We shall know how to get at this Duke Frederick, and teach him reason.” Aleander was quite elated with his success. To hear the haughty nuncio talk, one would have thought that the fire which consumed Luther’s books at Mentz was “the beginning of the end.” These flames (said they one to another at Rome) will spread terror far and wide. It was so with many timid and superstitious minds; but even in the hereditary states of Charles, the only places in which they dared carry out the bull, the people, and sometimes the nobles, often replied to these pontifical demonstrations by ridicule or by expressions of indignation. “Luther,” said the doctors of Louvain, when they appeared before Margaret, governor of the Netherlands, “Luther is overturning the christian faith.” — “Who is Luther?” asked the princess. — “An ignorant monk.” — “Well, then,” replied she, “do you who

are so wise and so numerous write against him. The world will rather believe many wise men than an isolated and unlearned man.” The Louvain doctors preferred an easier method. They erected a vast pile at their own expense. A great multitude thronged the place of execution. Students and citizens might be seen hastily traversing the crowd, bearing large volumes under their arms, which they threw into the flames. Their zeal edified both monks and doctors; but the trick was afterwards discovered — it was the Sermones Discipuli, Tartaretus, and other scholastic and papistical works, they had been throwing into the fire, instead of Luther’s writings! The Count of Nassau, viceroy of Holland replied to the Dominicans who solicited permission to burn the doctor’s books: “Go and preach the Gospel with as much purity as Luther does, and you will have to complain of nobody.” As the conversation turned upon the reformer at a banquet when the leading princes of the empire were present, the Lord of Ravenstein said aloud: “In the space of four centuries, a single Christian has ventured to raise his head, and him the pope wishes to put to death!” Luther, sensible of the

strength of his cause, remained tranquil in the midst of the tumult the bull had created. “If you did not press me so earnestly,” said he to Spalatin, “I should keep silence, well knowing that the work must be accomplished by the counsel and power of God.” The timid man was for speaking out, the strong desired to remain silent.

Luther discerned a power that escaped the eyes of his friend. “Be of good cheer,” continues the reformer. “It is Christ who has begun these things, and it is He that will accomplish them, whether I be banished or put to death. Jesus Christ is here present, and He who is within us is greater than he who is in the world.”

Chapter 10

Decisive Step of the Reformer

Duty obliged Luther to speak, that the truth might be manifested to the world. Rome has struck the blow: he will show how he has received it. The pope has put him under the ban of the Church; he will put the pope under the ban of Christendom. Hitherto the pontiff's commands have been allpowerful; he will oppose sentence to sentence, and the world shall know which has the greater strength. "I desire," said he, "to set my conscience at rest, by disclosing to all men the danger that threatens them;" and at the same time he prepared to make a fresh appeal to a general council. An appeal from the pope to a council was a crime. It is therefore by a new attack on the pontifical power that Luther presumes to justify those by which it had been preceded.

On the 17th November, a notary and five witnesses, among whom was Cruciger, met at ten o'clock in the morning in one of the halls of the

Augustine convent where Luther resided. There, the public officer (Sarctor of Eisleben) immediately proceeding to draw up the minute of his protest, the reformer in presence of these witnesses said with a solemn tone of voice: — “Considering that a general council of the Christian Church is above the pope, especially in matters of faith; “Considering that the power of the pope is not above but inferior to Scripture; and that he has no right to slaughter the sheep of Christ’s flock, and throw them into the jaws of the wolf; “I, Martin Luther, an Augustine friar, doctor of the Holy Scriptures at Wittenberg, appeal by these presents, in behalf of myself and of those who are or who shall be with me, from the most holy pope Leo to a future general and christian council.

“I appeal from the said pope, first, as an unjust, rash, and tyrannical judge, who condemns me without a hearing, and without giving any reasons for his judgment; secondly, as a heretic and an apostate, misled, hardened, and condemned by the Holy Scriptures, who commands me to deny that christian faith is necessary in the use of the

sacraments; thirdly, as an enemy, an antichrist, an adversary, an oppressor of Holy Scripture, who dares set his own words in opposition to the Word of God; fourthly, as a despiser, a calumniator, a blasphemer of the holy Christian Church, and of a free council, who maintains that a council is nothing of itself.

"For this reason, with all humility, I entreat the most serene, most illustrious, excellent, generous, noble, strong, wise, and prudent lords, namely, Charles emperor of Rome, the electors, princes, counts, barons, knights, gentlemen, councilors, cities and communities of the whole German nation, to adhere to my protest, and to resist with me the antichristian conduct of the pope, for the glory of God, the defense of the Church and of the christian doctrine, and for the maintenance of the free councils of Christendom; and Christ, our Lord, will reward them bountifully by his everlasting grace. But if there be any who scorn my prayer, and continue to obey that impious man the pope, rather than God, I reject by these presents all responsibility, having faithfully warned their

consciences, and I abandon them to the supreme judgment of God, with the pope and his adherents." Such is Luther's bill of divorce; such is his reply to the pontiff's bull. A great seriousness pervades the whole of this declaration. The charges he brings against the pope are of the gravest description, and it is not heedlessly that he makes them. This protest was circulated through Germany, and sent to most of the courts of Christendom.

Luther had, however, a still more daring step in reserve, although this which he had just taken appeared the extreme of audacity. He would in no respect be behindhand with Rome. The monk of Wittenberg will do all that the sovereign pontiff dares do. He gives judgment for judgment; he raises pile for pile. The son of the Medici and the son of the miner of Mansfeldt have gone down into the lists; and in this desperate struggle, which shakes the world, one does not strike a blow which the other does not return. On the 10th of December, a placard was posted on the walls of the university of Wittenberg, inviting the professors and students to be present at nine o'clock in the morning, at the

Eastern Gate, near the Holy Cross. A great number of doctors and students assembled, and Luther, walking at their head, conducted the procession to the appointed place. How many burning piles has Rome erected during the course of ages! Luther resolves to make a better application of the great Roman principle. It is only a few old papers that are about to be destroyed; and fire, thinks he, is intended for that purpose. A scaffold had been prepared. One of the oldest masters of arts set fire to it. As the flames rose high into the air, the formidable Augustine, wearing his frock, approached the pile, carrying the Canon Law, the Decretals, the Clementines, the papal Extravagants, some writings by Eck and Emser, and the pope's bull. The Decretals having been first consumed, Luther held up the bull, and said: "Since thou hast vexed the Holy One of the Lord, may everlasting fire vex and consume thee!" He then flung it into the flames. Never had war been declared with greater energy and resolution. After this Luther calmly returned to the city, and the crowd of doctors, professors, and students, testifying their approval by loud cheers, re-entered Wittenberg

with him. “The Decretals,” said Luther, “resemble a body whose face is meek as a young maiden’s, whose limbs are full of violence like those of a lion, and whose tail is filled with wiles like a serpent. Among all the laws of the popes, there is not one word that teaches us who is Jesus Christ.” “My enemies,” said he on another occasion, “have been able, by burning my books, to injure the cause of truth in the minds of the common people, and destroy their souls; for this reason, I consumed their books in return. A serious struggle has just begun. Hitherto I have been only playing with the pope. I began this work in God’s name; it will be ended without me and by His might. If they dare burn my book, in which more of the Gospel is to be found (I speak without boasting) than in all the books of the pope, I can with much greater reason burn their, in which no good can be discovered.” 545 If Luther had commenced the Reformation in this manner, such a step would undoubtedly have entailed the most deplorable results. Fanaticism might have been aroused by it, and the Church thrown into a course of violence and disorder. But the reformer had preluded his work by seriously

explaining the lessons of Scripture. The foundations had been wisely laid.

Now, a powerful blow, such as he had just given, might not only be without inconvenience, but even accelerate the moment in which Christendom would throw off its bonds.

Luther thus solemnly declared that he separated from the pope and his church. This might appear necessary to him after his letter to Leo X. He accepted the excommunication that Rome had pronounced. He showed the christian world that there was now war unto death between him and the pope. He burnt his ships upon the beach, thus imposing on himself the necessity of advancing and of combating.

Luther had re-entered Wittenberg. On the morrow, the lecture-room was more crowded than usual. All minds were in a state of excitement; a solemn feeling pervaded the assembly; they waited expecting an address from the doctor. He lectured on the Psalms, — a course that he had commenced

in the month of March in the preceding year. Having finished his explanations, he remained silent a few minutes, and then continued energetically: “Be on your guard against the laws and statutes of the pope.

I have burnt his Decretals, but this is merely child’s play. It is time, and more than time, that the pope were burnt; that is (explaining himself immediately), the see of Rome, with all its doctrines and abominations.” Then assuming a more solemn tone, he added: “If you do not contend with your whole heart against the impious government of the pope, you cannot be saved. Whoever takes delight in the religion and worship of popery, will be eternally lost in the world to come.” “If you reject it,” continued he, “you must expect to incur every kind of danger, and even to lose your lives. But it is far better to be exposed to such perils in this world than to keep silence! so long as I live, I will denounce to my brethren the sore and the plague of Babylon, for fear that many who are with us should fall back like the rest into the bottomless pit.” We can scarcely imagine the

effect produced on the assembly by this discourse, the energy of which surprises us. “Not one among us,” adds the candid student who has handed it down, “unless he be a senseless log of wood (as all the papists are, he says parenthetically), doubts that this is truth pure and undefiled. It is evident to all believers that Dr. Luther is an angel of the living God, called to feed Christ’s wandering sheep with the Word of God.” This discourse and the act by which it was crowned mark an important epoch in the Reformation. The dispute at Leipsic had inwardly detached Luther from the pope. But the moment in which he burnt the bull, was that in which he declared in the most formal manner his entire separation from the Bishop of Rome and his church, and his attachment to the universal Church, such as it had been founded by the apostles of Jesus Christ. At the eastern gate of the city he lit up a fire that has been burning for three centuries.

“The pope,” said he, “has three crowns; and for this reason: the first is against God, for he condemns religion; the second against the emperor, for he condemns the secular power; the third is

against society, for he condemns marriage.” When he was reproached with inveighing too severely against popery: “Alas!” replied he, “would that I could speak against it with a voice of thunder, and that each of my words was a thunderbolt!” This firmness spread to Luther’s friends and fellowcountrymen. A whole nation rallied around him. The university of Wittemberg in particular grew daily more attached to this hero, to whom it was indebted for its importance and glory. Carlstadt then raised his voice against that “furious lion of Florence,” which tore all human and divine laws, and trampled under foot the principles of eternal truth. Melancthon, also, about this time addressed the states of the empire in a writing characterized by the elegance and wisdom peculiar to this amiable man. It was in reply to a work attributed to Emser, but published under the name of Rhadinus, a Roman divine. Never had Luther himself spoken with greater energy; and yet there was a grace in Melancthon’s language that won its way to every heart.

After showing by various passages of Scripture

that the pope is not superior to the other bishops: “What is it,” says he to the states of the empire, “that prevents our depriving the pope of the rights that we have given him? It matters little to Luther whether our riches, that is to say, the treasures of Europe, are sent to Rome; but the great cause of his grief and our is, that the laws of the pontiffs and the reign of the pope not only endanger the souls of men but ruin them entirely. Each one may judge for himself whether it is becoming or not to contribute his money for the maintenance of Roman luxury; but to judge of religion and its sacred mysteries, is not within the scope of the commonalty. It is on this ground, then, that Luther appeals to your faith and zeal, and that all pious men unite with him, — some aloud, others with sighs and groans. Call to remembrance that you are Christians, ye princes of a christian people, and wrest these sad relics of Christendom from the tyranny of Antichrist.

They are deceivers who pretend that you have no authority over priests.

That same spirit which animated Jehu against the priest of Baal, urges you, by this precedent, to abolish the Roman superstition, which is much more horrible than the idolatry of Baal." Thus spoke the gentle Melancthon to the princes of Germany.

A few cries of alarm were heard among the friends of the Reformation.

Timid minds inclined to extreme measures of conciliation, and Staupitz, in particular, expressed the deepest anxiety. "All this matter has been hitherto mere play," wrote Luther to him. "You have said yourself, that if God does not do these things, it is impossible they can be done. The tumult becomes more and more tumultuous, and I do not think it will ever be appeased, except at the last day." Thus did Luther encourage these affrighted minds. Three centuries have passed away, and the tumult has not yet subsided!

"The papacy," continued he, "is no longer what it was yesterday and the day before. Let it

excommunicate and burn my writings!.....let it slay me!.....it shall not check that which is advancing. Some great portent is at our doors. I burnt the bull, at first with great trembling, but now I experience more joy from it than from any action I have ever done in my life." We involuntarily stop, and are delighted at reading in Luther's great soul the mighty future that was preparing. "O my father," said he to Staupitz in conclusion, "pray for the Word of God and for me. I am carried away and tossed about by these waves." Thus war was declared on both sides. The combatants threw away their scabbards. The Word of God reasserted its rights, and deposed him who had taken the place of God himself. Society was shaken. In every age selfish men are not wanting who would let human society sleep on in error and corruption; but wise men, although they may be timid, think differently. "We are well aware," said the gentle and moderate Melancthon, "that statesmen have a dread of innovation; and it must be acknowledged that, in this sad confusion which is denominated human life, controversies, and even those which proceed from the justest causes, are always tainted with

some evil. It is requisite, however, that in the Church, the Word and commandments of God should be preferred to every mortal thing. God threatens with his eternal anger those who endeavor to suppress the truth.

For this reason it was a duty, a christian duty, incumbent on Luther, and from which he could not draw back, especially as he was a doctor of the Church of God, to reprove the pernicious errors which unprincipled men were disseminating with inconceivable effrontery. If controversy engenders many evils, as I see to my great sorrow," adds the wise Philip, "it is the fault of those who at first propagated error, and of those who, filled with diabolical hatred, are now seeking to uphold it." But all men did not think thus. Luther was overwhelmed with reproaches: the storm burst upon him from every quarter of heaven. "He is quite alone," said some; "he is a teacher of novelties," said others.

"Who knows," replied Luther, sensible of the call that was addressed to him from on high, "if

God has not chosen and called me, and if they ought not to fear that, by despising me, they despise God himself? Moses was alone at the departure from Egypt; Elijah was alone in the reign of King Ahab; Isaiah alone in Jerusalem; Ezekiel alone in Babylon.....God never selected as a prophet either the highpriest or any other great personage; but ordinarily he chose low and despised men, once even the shepherd Amos. In every age, the saints have had to reprove the great, kings, princes, priests, and wise men, at the peril of their lives.....And was it not the same under the New Testament? Ambrose was alone in his time; after him, Jerome was alone; later still, Augustine was alone.....I do not say that I am a prophet; but I say that they ought to fear, precisely because I am alone and that they are many.

I am sure of this, that the Word of God is with me, and that it is not with them.

“It is said also,” continues he, “that I put forward novelties, and that it is impossible to believe that all the other doctors were so long in

error.

“No! I do not preach novelties. But I say that all christian doctrines have been lost sight of by those who should have preserved them; namely, the learned and the bishops. Still I doubt not that the truth remained in a few hearts, even were it with infants in the cradle. Poor peasants and simple children now understand Jesus Christ better than the pope, the bishops, and the doctors.

“I am accused of rejecting the holy doctors of the Church. I do not reject them; but, since all these doctors endeavor to prove their writings by Holy Scripture, Scripture must be clearer and surer than they are. Who would think of proving an obscure passage by one that was obscurer still? Thus, the, necessity obliges me to have recourse to the Bible, as all the doctors have done, and to call upon it to pronounce upon their writings; for the Bible alone is lord and master.

“But (say they) men of power persecute him. Is it not clear, according to Scripture, that the

persecutors are generally wrong, and the persecuted right; that the majority has ever been on the side of falsehood, and the minority with truth? Truth has in every age caused an outcry." Luther next examines the propositions condemned in the bull as heretical, and demonstrates their truth by proofs drawn from the Holy Scriptures.

With what vigor especially does he not maintain the doctrine of Grace!

"What! before and without grace, nature can hate sin, avoid it, and repent of it; while even after grace is come, this nature loves sin, seeks it, longs for it, and never ceases contending against grace, and being angry with it; a state which all the saints mourn over continually!.....It is as if men said that a strong tree, which I cannot bend by the exertion of all my strength, would bend of itself, as soon as I left if, or that a torrent which no dikes or barriers can check, would cease running as soon as it was left alone.....No! it is not by reflecting on sin and its consequences that we arrive at repentance; but it is by contemplating Jesus Christ, his wounds, and

his infinite love. The knowledge of sin must proceed from repentance, and not repentance from the knowledge of sin.

Knowledge is the fruit, repentance is the tree. In my country, the fruit grows on the tree; but it would appear that in the states of the holy Father the tree grows on the fruit." The courageous doctor, although he protests, still retracts some of his propositions. Our astonishment will cease when we see the manner in which he does it. After quoting the four propositions on indulgences, condemned by the bull, he simply adds: — "In submission to the holy and learned bull, I retract all that I have ever taught concerning indulgences. If my books have been justly burnt, it is certainly because I made concessions to the pope on the doctrine of indulgences; for this reason I condemn them myself to the flames." He retracts also with respect to John Huss: "I now say that not a few articles, but all the articles of John Huss are wholly christian. By condemning John Huss, the pope has condemned the Gospel. I have done five times more than he, and yet I much fear I have not done

enough. Huss only said that a wicked pope is not a member of Christendom; but if Peter himself were now sitting at Rome, I should deny that he was pope by Divine appointment."

Chapter 11

Coronation of Charles the Fifth

The mighty words of the reformer sunk deep into men’s hearts, and contributed to their emancipation. The sparks that flew from every one of them were communicated to the whole nation. But still a greater question remained to be solved. Would the prince in whose states Luther was residing, favor or oppose the execution of the bull? The reply appeared doubtful. The elector, as well as all the princes of the empire, was at Aixla-Chapelle.

Here the crown of Charlemagne was placed on the head of the youngest but most powerful monarch of Christendom. An unusual pomp and magnificence were displayed in this ceremony. Charles V, Frederick, princes, ministers, and ambassadors, repaired immediately to Cologne.

Aix-la-Chapelle, where the plague was raging, seemed to pour its whole population into this ancient city on the banks of the Rhine.

Among the crowd of strangers who thronged this city were the two papal nuncios, Marino Caraccioli and Jerome Aleander. Caraccioli, who had already been ambassador at the court of Maximilian, was commissioned to congratulate the new emperor, and to treat with him on political matters.

But Rome had discovered that, to succeed in extinguishing the Reformation, it was necessary to send into Germany a nuncio specially accredited for this work, and of a character, skill, and activity fitted for its accomplishment. Aleander had been selected. This man, afterwards invested with the purple of the cardinals, would appear to have been descended from a family of respectable antiquity, and not from Jewish parents, as it has been said. The guilty Borgia invited him to Rome to be the secretary of his son — of that Caesar before whose murderous sword all Rome trembled. “Like master,

like man," says an historian, who thus compares Aleander to Alexander VI. This judgment is in our opinion too severe. After Borgia's death, Aleander applied to his studies with fresh ardor. His knowledge of Greek, Hebrew, Chaldee, and Arabic, gained him the reputation of being the most learned man of his age. He devoted himself with his whole heart to everything he undertook. The zeal with which he studied languages was by no means inferior to that which he exerted afterwards in persecuting the Reformation. Leo X attached him to his own service. Some historians speak of his epicurean manners; Romanists of the integrity of his life. It would appear that he was fond of luxury, parade, and amusement. "Aleander is living at Venice like a grovelling epicurean, and in high dignity," wrote his old friend Erasmus concerning him. All are agreed in confessing that he was violent, prompt in his actions, full of ardor, indefatigable, imperious, and devoted to the pope.

Eck was the fiery and intrepid champion of the schools: Aleander the haughty ambassador of the proud court of the pontiffs. He seemed born to be a

nuncio.

Rome had made every preparation to destroy the monk of Wittenberg. The duty of attending the coronation of the emperor, as the pope's representative, was a mere secondary mission in Aleander's eyes, yet calculated to facilitate his task by the respect in secured for him. But he was specially charged to prevail upon Charles to crush the rising Reformation. As soon as Aleander arrived at Cologne, he and Caraccioli set every wheel in motion to have Luther's heretical works burnt throughout the empire, but particularly under the eyes of the German princes assembled in that city. Charles V had already given his consent with regard to his hereditary states. The agitation of men's minds was excessive. "Such measures," said they to Charles's ministers and the nuncios themselves, "far from healing the wound, will only increase it. Do you imagine that Luther's doctrines are found only in those books that you are throwing into the fire? They are written, where you cannot reach them, in the hearts of the nation .....If you desire to employ force, it must be that of countless

swords unsheathed to massacre a whole nation. A few logs of wood piled up to burn a few sheets of paper will effect nothing; and such arms are unbecoming the dignity of an emperor and of a pontiff.” — The nuncio defended his burning piles: “These flames,” said he, “are a sentence of condemnation written in colossal characters, equally intelligible to those who are near and those who are afar off, — to the learned and ignorant, — and even to those who cannot read.” But it was not in reality papers and books that the nuncio wanted: it was Luther himself. “These flames,” resumed he, “are not sufficient to purify the infected air of Germany. If they terrify the simple, they do not punish the wicked. We require an imperial edict against Luther’s person.” Aleander did not find the emperor so compliant when the reformer’s life was in question, as when his books only were concerned.

“As I have but recently ascended the throne,” said he to Aleander, “I cannot without the advice of my councilors and the consent of the princes strike such a blow as this against a numerous faction

surrounded by so many powerful defenders. Let us first learn what our father, the Elector of Saxony, thinks of this matter; we shall afterwards see what reply we can make to the pope." The nuncios, therefore, proceeded to make trial of their artifices and eloquence on the elector.

The first Sunday in November, Frederick having attended mass in the Greyfriars' convent, Caraccioli and Aleander begged an audience. He received them in the presence of the Bishop of Trent and several of his councilors. Caraccioli first presented the papal brief. Of a milder disposition than Aleander, he thought it his duty to win over the prince by his flatteries, and began by eulogizing him and his ancestors. "It is to you," said he, "that we look for the salvation of the Roman Church and of the Roman Empire." But the impetuous Aleander, wishing to come to the point, hastily stepped forward and interrupted his colleague, who modestly gave way: "It is to me and Eck," said he, "that this business of Martin's has been intrusted. Look at the imminent dangers into which this man is plunging the christian republic. If we do not

make haste to apply some remedy, the empire is ruined. Why were the Greeks destroyed, but because they abandoned the pope? You cannot remain united to Luther without separating from Jesus Christ. I require two things of you, in the name of his holiness: first, that you will burn Luther's writings; secondly, that you will inflict on him the punishment he deserves, or at least that you will deliver him up to the pope. The emperor and all the princes of the empire have declared their willingness to accede to our request; you alone hesitate still." Frederick replied, through the medium of the Bishop of Trent: "This matter is too serious to be settled now. We will let you know our determination." The situation in which Frederick was placed was a difficult one. What part ought he to take? On the one side were the emperor, the princes of the empire, and the supreme pontiff of Christendom, whose authority the elector had as yet no idea of throwing off; on the other, a monk, a feeble monk; for it was he only that they demanded. Charles's reign had just commenced. Ought Frederick, the oldest and wisest of all the princes of Germany, to sow disunion in the

empire? Besides, how could he renounce that ancient piety which led him even to the sepulcher of Christ?

Other voices were then heard. A young prince, who afterwards wore the electoral crown, and whose reign was signalized by the greatest misfortunes, John Frederick, son of Duke John, the elector's nephew, and Spalatin's pupil, a youth seventeen years of age, had received in his heart a sincere love for the truth, and was firmly attached to Luther. When he saw the reformer struck by the Roman anathemas, he embraced his cause with the warmth of a young Christian and of a youthful prince. He wrote to the doctor and to his uncle, nobly entreating the latter to protect Luther against his enemies. On the other hand, Spalatin, frequently it is true very dejected, Pontanus, and the other councilors who were with the elector at Cologne, represented to the prince that he ought not to abandon the reformer. In the midst of this general agitation, one man alone remained tranquil: it was Luther. While it was sought to preserve him by the influence of the great, the monk in his

cloister at Wittenberg thought that it was rather for him to save the great ones of this world. “If the Gospel,” wrote he to Spalatin, “was of a nature to be propagated or maintained by the powers of this world, God would not have intrusted it to fishermen. It belongs not to the princes and pontiffs of this age to defend the Word of God.

They have enough to do to shelter themselves from the judgments of the Lord and his Anointed. If I speak, it is in order that they may attain a knowledge of the Divine Word, and that by it they may be saved.” Luther’s expectation was not to be deceived. That faith, which a convent at Wittenberg concealed, exerted its power in the palaces of Cologne.

Frederick’s heart, shaken perhaps for a moment, grew stronger by degrees.

He was indignant that the pope, in defiance of his earnest entreaties to examine into the matter in Germany, had decided upon it at Rome at the request of a personal enemy of the reformer, and

that in his absence this opponent should have dared publish in Saxony a bull that threatened the existence of the university and the peace of his subjects. Besides, the elector was convinced that Luther was wronged. He shuddered at the thought of delivering an innocent man into the hands of his cruel enemies.

Justice was the principle on which he acted, and not the wishes of the pope. He came to the determination of not giving way to Rome. On the 4th of November, his councilors replied on his behalf to the Roman nuncios who came to the elector's, in the presence of the Bishop of Trent, that he had seen with much pain the advantage that Dr. Eck had taken of his absence to involve in the condemnation several persons who were not named in the bull; that since his departure from Saxony, it was possible that an immense number of learned and ignorant men, of the clergy and laity, might have united and adhered to the cause and appeal of Luther; that neither his imperial majesty nor any other person had shown that Luther's writings had been refuted, and that they only deserved to be

thrown into the fire; and finally he requested that Doctor Luther should be furnished with a safeconduct, so that he might appear before a tribunal of learned, pious, and impartial judges.

After this declaration, Aleander, Caraccioli, and their followers retired to deliberate. This was the first time that the elector had publicly made known his intentions with regard to the reformer. The nuncios had expected quite a different course from him. Now (they had thought) that the elector, by maintaining his character for impartiality, would draw dangers upon himself the whole extent of which he could not foresee, he will not hesitate to sacrifice the monk. Thus Rome had reasoned. But her machinations were doomed to fail before a force that did not enter into her calculations, — the love of justice and of truth.

Being re-admitted into the presence of the elector’s councilors, the imperious Aleander said: “I should like to know what the elector would think, if one of his subjects should choose the king of France, or any other foreign prince, for judge.”

Seeing that nothing could shake the Saxon councilors, he said: “We will execute the bull; we will hunt out and burn Luther’s writings. As for his person,” added he, affecting a contemptuous indifference, “the pope is not desirous of staining his hands with the blood of the wretched man.” The news of the reply the elector had made to the nuncios having reached Wittenberg, Luther’s friends were filled with joy. Melancthon and Amsdorff, especially, indulged in the most flattering anticipations. “The German nobility,” said Melancthon, “will direct their course by the example of this prince, whom they follow in all things, as their Nestor. If Homer styled his hero the bulwark of the Greeks, why should we not call Frederick the bulwark of the Germans?” The oracle of courts, the torch of the schools, the light of the world, Erasmus, was then at Cologne. Many princes had invited him, to be guided by his advice. At the epoch of the Reformation, Erasmus was the leader of the moderates; he imagined himself to be so, but without just cause; for when truth and error meet face to face, justice lies not between them. He was the chief of that philosophical and academical

party which, for ages, had attempted to correct Rome, but had never succeeded; he was the representative of human wisdom, but that wisdom was too weak to batter down the high places of Popery. It needed that wisdom from God, which men often call foolishness, but at whose voice mountains crumble into dust. Erasmus would neither throw himself into the arms of Luther, nor sit at the pope's feet. He hesitated, and often wavered between these two powers, attracted at one time towards Luther, then suddenly repelled in the direction of the pope. "The last spark of christian piety seems nearly extinguished," said he in his letter to Albert; "and 'tis this which has moved Luther's heart. He cares neither for money nor honors." But this letter, which the imprudent Ulrich of Hutten had published, caused Erasmus so much annoyance, that he determined to be more cautious in future. Besides, he was accused of being Luther's accomplice, and the latter offended him by his imprudent language. "Almost all good men are for Luther," said he; "but I see that we are tending towards a revolt.....I would not have my name joined with his. That would injure me

without serving him." "So be it," replied Luther; "since that annoys you, I promise never to make mention either of you or of your friends." Such was the man to whom both the partisans and enemies of the Reformation applied.

The elector, knowing that the opinion of a man so much respected as Erasmus would have great influence, invited the illustrious Dutchman to visit him. Erasmus obeyed the order. This was on the 5th December.

Luther's friends could not see this step without secret uneasiness. The elector was standing before the fire, with Spalatin at his side, when Erasmus was introduced. "What is your opinion of Luther?" immediately demanded Frederick. The prudent Erasmus, surprised at so direct a question, sought at first to elude replying. He screwed up his mouth, bit his lips, and said not a word. Upon this the elector, raising his eyebrows, as was his custom when he spoke to people from whom he desired to have a precise answer, says Spalatin, fixed his piercing glance on Erasmus. The latter, not

knowing how to escape from his confusion, said at last, in a half jocular tone: “Luther has committed two great faults: he has attacked the crown of the pope and the bellies of the monks.” The elector smiled, but gave his visitor to understand that he was in earnest. Erasmus then laying aside his reserve, said: “The cause of all this dispute is the hatred of the monks towards learning, and the fear they have of seeing their tyranny destroyed. What weapons are they using against Luther? — clamor, cabals, hatred, and libels. The more virtuous a man is, and the greater his attachment to the Gospel, the less is he opposed to Luther. The severity of the bull has aroused the indignation of all good men, and no one can recognize in it the gentleness of a vicar of Christ. Two only, out of all the universities, have condemned Luther; and they have only condemned him, not proved him in the wrong. Do not be deceived; the danger is greater than some men imagine. Arduous and difficult things are pressing on. To begin Charles’s reign by so odious an act as Luther’s imprisonment, would be a mournful omen. The world is thirsting for evangelical truth; let us beware of setting up a

blamable opposition.

Let this affair be inquired into by serious men, — men of sound judgment; this will be the course most consistent with the dignity of the pope himself!” Thus spoke Erasmus to the elector. Such frankness may perhaps astonish the reader; but Erasmus knew whom he was addressing. Spalatin was delighted. He went out with Erasmus, and accompanied him as far as the house of the Count of Nucnar, provost of Cologne, where Erasmus was residing. The latter, in an impulse of frankness, on retiring to his study, took a pen, sat down, wrote a summary of what he had said to the elector, and forwarded the paper to Spalatin; but erelong the fear of Aleander came over the timid Erasmus; the courage that the presence of the elector and his chaplain had communicated to him had evaporated; and he begged Spalatin to return the too daring paper, for fear it should fall into the hands of the terrible nuncio. But it was too late.

The elector, feeling re-assured by the opinion of Erasmus, spoke to the emperor in a more

decided tone. Erasmus himself endeavored, in nocturnal conferences, like those of Nicodemus of old, to persuade Charles's councilors that the whole business should be referred to impartial judges.

Perhaps he hoped to be named arbitrator in a cause which threatened to divide the christian world. His vanity would have been flattered by such an office. But at the same time, and not to lose his credit at Rome, he wrote the most submissive letters to Leo, who replied with a kindness that seriously mortified Aleander. From love to the pope, the nuncio would willingly have reprimanded the pope; for Erasmus communicated these letters from the pontiff, and they added still more to his credit. The nuncio complained of it to Rome. "Pretend not to notice this man's wickedness," was the reply; "prudence enjoins this: we must leave a door open to repentance." Charles at the same time adopted a "see-saw" system, which consisted in flattering the pope and the elector, and appearing to incline by turns towards each, according to the necessities of the moment. One of his ministers,

whom he had sent to Rome on Spanish business, arrived at the very moment that Doctor Eck was clamorously urging on Luther's condemnation. The wily ambassador immediately saw what advantage his master might derive from the Saxon monk. "Your Majesty," he wrote on the 12th May 1520 to the emperor, who was still in Spain, "ought to go into Germany, and show some favor to a certain Martin Luther, who is at the Saxon court, and who by the sermons he preaches gives much anxiety to the court of Rome." Such from the commencement was the view Charles took of the Reformation. It was of no importance for him to know on which side truth or error might be found, or to discern what the great interests of the German nation required. His only question was, what policy demanded, and what should be done to induce the pope to support the emperor. And this was well known at Rome. Charles's ministers intimated to Aleander the course their master intended following. "The emperor," said they, "will behave towards the pope as he behaves towards the emperor; for he has no desire to increase the power of his rivals, and particularly of the King of

France.” At these words the imperious nuncio gave way to his indignation. “What!” replied he, “supposing the pope should abandon the emperor, must the latter renounce his religion? If Charles wishes to avenge himself thus.....let him tremble! this baseness will turn against himself.” But the nuncio’s threats did not shake the imperial diplomatists.

Chapter 12

Luther on Confession

If the legates of Rome failed with the mighty ones of this world, the inferior agents of the papacy succeeded in spreading trouble among the lower ranks. The army of Rome had heard the commands of its chief.

Fanatical priests made use of the bull to alarm timid consciences, and wellmeaning but unenlightened ecclesiastics considered it a sacred duty to act in conformity with the instructions of the pope. It was in the confessional that Luther had commenced his struggle against Rome; it was in the confessional that Rome contended against the reformer's adherents.

Scouted in the face of the world, the bull became powerful in these solitary tribunals. "Have you read Luther's works?" asked the confessors; "do you possess any of them? do you regard them as true or heretical?" And if the penitent hesitated

to pronounce the anathema, the priest refused absolution. Many consciences were troubled. Great agitation prevailed among the people. This skillful manoeuver bid fair to restore to the papal yoke the people already won over to the Gospel. Rome congratulated herself on having in the thirteenth century erected this tribunal, so skillfully adapted to render the free consciences of Christians the slaves of the priests. So long as this remains standing, her reign is not over.

Luther was informed of these proceedings. What can he do, unaided, to baffle this manoeuver? The Word, the Word proclaimed loudly and courageously, shall be his weapon. The Word will find access to those alarmed consciences, those terrified souls, and give them strength. A powerful impulse was necessary, and Luther's voice made itself heard. He addressed the penitents with fearless dignity, with a noble disdain of all secondary considerations. "When you are asked whether you approve of my books or not," said he, "reply: 'You are a confessor, and not an inquisitor or a gaoler. My duty is to confess what my

conscience leads me to say: yours is not to sound and extort the secrets of my heart. Give me absolution, and then dispute with Luther, with the pope, with whomsoever you please; but do not convert the sacrament of penance into a quarrel and a combat.' — And if the confessor will not give way, then (continues Luther) I would rather go without absolution. Do not be uneasy: if man does not absolve you, God will. Rejoice that you are absolved by God himself, and appear at the altar without fear. At the last judgment the priest will have to give an account of the absolution he has refused you. They may deprive us of the sacrament, but they cannot deprive us of the strength and grace that God has connected with it. It is not in their will or in their power, but in our own faith, that God has placed salvation. Dispense with the sacrament, altar, priest, and church; the Word of God, condemned by the bull, is more than all these things.

The soul can do without the sacrament, but it cannot live without the Word. Christ, the true bishop, will undertake to give you spiritual food."

Thus did Luther's voice sink into every alarmed conscience, and make its way into every troubled family, imparting courage and faith. But he was not content simply with defending himself; he felt that he ought to become the assailant, and return blow for blow. A Romish theologian, Ambrose Catharinus, had written against him. "I will stir up the bile of this Italian beast," said Luther. He kept his word. In his reply, he proved, by the revelations of Daniel and St. John, by the epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Jude, that the reign of Antichrist, predicted and described in the Bible, was the Papacy. "I know for certain," said he in conclusion, "that our Lord Jesus Christ lives and reigns. Strong in this assurance, I should not fear many thousands of popes. May God visit us at last according to his infinite power, and show forth the day of the glorious advent of his Son, in which he will destroy the wicked one. And let all the people say, Amen!" And all the people did say, Amen! A holy terror seized upon their souls.

It was Antichrist whom they beheld seated on the pontifical throne. This new idea, which derived

greater strength from the prophetic descriptions launched forth by Luther into the midst of his contemporaries, inflicted the most terrible blow on Rome. Faith in the Word of God took the place of that faith which the Church alone had hitherto enjoyed; and the power of the pope, long the object of adoration among nations, had now become a source of terror and detestation.

Germany replied to the papal bull by overwhelming Luther with its acclamations. Although the plague was raging at Wittenberg, new students arrived every day, and from four to six hundred disciples habitually sat at the feet of Luther and Melancthon in the halls of the academy. The two churches belonging to the convent and the city were not large enough for the crowd that hung listening to the reformer’s words. The prior of the Augustines was fearful that these temples would fall under the weight of the hearers. But this spiritual movement was not confined within the walls of Wittenberg; it spread through Germany. Princes, nobles, and learned men from every quarter, addressed Luther in letters breathing

consolation and faith. The doctor showed the chaplain more than thirty such. The Margrave of Brandenburg came one day to Wittenberg, with several other princes, to visit Luther. “They desired to see the man,” said the latter. In truth, all were desirous of seeing the man whose words had moved the people, and made the pontiff of the West totter upon his throne.

The enthusiasm of Luther’s friends increased every day. “What unheard-of foolishness in Emser,” exclaimed Melancthon, “who has ventured to measure himself with our Hercules, not perceiving the finger of God in every one of Luther’s actions, as Pharaoh would not see it in those of Moses.” The gentle Melancthon found words of power to arouse those who seemed to be retrograding or even remaining stationary. “Luther has stood up for the truth,” wrote he to John Hess, “and yet you keep silence!.....He is alive and prospering still, although the lion (Leo) is chafing and roaring. Bear in mind that it is impossible for Roman impiety to approve of the Gospel. How can this age be wanting in men like Judas, Caiaphas,

Pilate, or Herod? Arm yourself, therefore, with the weapons of God's Word against such adversaries." All Luther's writings, his Lord's Prayer, and particularly his new edition of the German Theology, were perused with avidity. Reading clubs were formed for the circulation of his works among their members. His friends reprinted them, and got them distributed by hawkers. They were recommended from the pulpit. There was a general wish for a German Church; and the people demanded that no one should henceforth be invested with any ecclesiastical dignity, unless he could preach to the people in the vulgar tongue, and that in every quarter the bishops of Germany should resist the papal power.

Nor was this all: biting satires against the principal ultra-montanists were circulated throughout the provinces of the empire. The opposition rallied all its forces around this new doctrine, which gave it precisely what it stood in need of..... a justification in the eyes of religion. Most of the lawyers, wearied by the encroachments of the ecclesiastical tribunals, attached themselves

to the reform, but the humanists, in particular, eagerly embraced this party. Ulrich Hutten was indefatigable. He addressed letters to Luther, to the legates, and to the most considerable men in Germany. “I tell you, and repeat it, Marino,” said he to the legate Caraccioli, in one of his works, “the darkness with which you had covered our eyes is dispersed; the Gospel is preached; the truth is proclaimed; the absurdities of Rome are overwhelmed with contempt; your decrees languish and die; liberty is beginning to dawn upon us!” Not content with employing prose, Hutten had recourse to verse also. He published his Outcry on the Lutheran Conflagration, in which, appealing to Jesus Christ, he beseeches him to consume with the brightness of his countenance all who dared deny his authority. Above all, he set about writing in German. “Hitherto,” said he, “I have written in Latin, a tongue not intelligible to every one; but now I address all my fellow-countrymen!” His German rhymes unveiled to the people the long and disgraceful catalogue of the sins of the Roman court. But Hutten did not wish to confine himself to mere words; he was eager to interfere in the

struggle with the sword; and he thought that the vengeance of God should be wrought by the swords and halberds of those valiant warriors of whom Germany was so proud. Luther opposed this mad project: “I desire not,” said he, “to fight for the Gospel with violence and bloodshed. I have written to Hutten to this effect.” The celebrated painter Lucas Cranach published, under the title of the Passion of Christ and Antichrist, a set of engravings which represented on one side the glory and magnificence of the pope, and on the other the humiliation and sufferings of the Redeemer. The inscriptions were written by Luther. These engravings, designed with considerable skill, produced an effect beyond all previous example. The people withdrew from a church that appeared in every respect so opposed to the spirit of its Founder.

“This is a very good work for the laity,” said Luther. Many persons wielded weapons against the papacy, that had but little connection with the holiness of a christian life. Emser had replied to Luther’s book (To the Goat of Leipsic) by another

whose title was To the Bull of Wittenberg. The name was not badly selected. But at Magdeburg Emser's work was suspended to the common gibbet, with this inscription: "The book is worthy of the place," and a scourge was hung at its side, to indicate the punishment the author merited. At Doeblin some persons wrote under the papal bull, in ridicule of its ineffectual thunders, "The nest is here, but the birds have flown." The students at Wittenberg, taking advantage of the license of the carnival, dressed up one of their number in a costume similar to the pope's, and paraded him with great pomp through the streets of the city, but in a manner somewhat too ludicrous, as Luther observes. When they reached the great square, they approached the river, and some, pretending a sudden attack, appeared desirous of throwing the pope into the water. But the pontiff, having little inclination for such a bath, took to his heels; his cardinals, bishops, and familiars imitated his example, dispersing into every quarter of the city. The students pursued them through the streets; and there was hardly a corner in Wittenberg where some Roman dignitary had not taken refuge from

the shouts and laughter of the excited populace.

“The enemy of Christ,” says Luther, “who makes a mockery of kings, and even of Christ, richly deserves to be thus mocked himself.” In our opinion he is wrong; truth is too beautiful to be thus polluted. She should combat without the aid of ballads, caricatures, and the masquerades of a carnival. Perhaps, without these popular demonstrations, her success would be less apparent; but it would be purer, and consequently more lasting. However that may be, the imprudent and prejudiced conduct of the Roman court had excited universal antipathy; and this very bull, by which the papacy thought to crush the whole reformation, was precisely that which made the revolt burst out in every quarter.

Yet the reformer did not find intoxication and triumph in everything.

Behind that chariot in which he was dragged by a people excited and transported with admiration, there was not wanting the slave to remind him of

his miserable state. Some of his friends seemed inclined to retrace their steps. Staupitz, whom he designated his father, appeared shaken. The pope had accused him, and Staupitz had declared his willingness to submit to the decision of his holiness. “I fear,” wrote Luther to him, “that by accepting the pope for judge, you seem to reject me and the doctrines I have maintained. If Christ loves you, he will constrain you to recall your letter. Christ is condemned, stripped, and blasphemed; this is a time not to fear, but to raise the voice. For this reason, while you exhort me to be humble, I exhort you to be proud; for you have too much humility, as I have too much pride. The world may call me proud, covetous, an adulterer, a murderer, antipope, one who is guilty of every crime.....What matters it! provided I am not reproached with having wickedly kept silence at the moment our Lord said with sorrow: I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me. (Psalm cxlii.) The Word of Jesus Christ is a Word not of peace, but of the sword. If you will not follow Jesus Christ, I will walk alone, will advance alone, and alone will I carry the fortress.” Thus

Luther, like a general at the head of an army, surveyed the whole field of battle; and while his voice inspirited new soldiers to the conflict, he discovered those of his troops who appeared weak, and recalled them to the line of duty. His exhortations were heard everywhere. His letters rapidly followed each other. Three presses were constantly occupied in multiplying his writings. His words ran through the people, strengthening the alarmed consciences in the confessionals, upholding in the convents timid souls that were ready to faint, and maintaining the rights of truth in the palaces of princes.

“In the midst of the storms that assail me,” wrote Luther to the elector, “I hoped to find peace at last. But now I see that this was the vain thought of a man. From day to day the waters rise, and already I am entirely surrounded by the waves. The tempest is bursting upon me with frightful tumult. In one hand I grasp the sword, with the other I build up the walls of Zion.” His ancient ties are broken: the hand that had hurled against him the thunders of excommunication had snapped them

asunder.

“Excommunicated by the bull,” said he, “I am absolved from the authority of the pope and of the monastic laws. Joyfully do I welcome this deliverance. But I shall neither quit the habit of my order nor the convent.” And yet, amid this agitation, he does not lose sight of the dangers to which his soul is exposed in the struggle. He perceives the necessity of keeping a strict watch over himself. “You do well to pray for me,” wrote he to Pellican, who resided at Basle. “I cannot devote sufficient time to holy exercises; life is a cross to me. You do well to exhort me to modesty: I feel its necessity; but I am not master of myself; I am carried away by mysterious impulses. I wish no one ill; but my enemies press on me with such fury, that I do not sufficiently guard against the temptations of Satan. Pray, then, for me!” Thus the reformer and the Reformation were hastening towards the goal whither God called them. The agitation was gaining ground. The men who seemed likely to be most faithful to the hierarchy began to be moved.

“Those very persons,” says Eck ingenuously enough, “who hold the best livings an the richest prebends from the pope, remain as mute as fishes.

Many of them even extol Luther as a man filled with the Divine spirit, and style the defenders of the pope mere sophists and flatterers.” The Church, apparently full of vigor, supported by treasures, governments, and armies, but in reality exhausted and feeble, having no love for God, no christian life, no enthusiasm for the truth, found itself face to face with men who were simple but courageous, and who, knowing that God is with those who contend in behalf of his Word, had no doubt of victory. In every age it has been seen how great is the strength of an idea to penetrate the masses, to stir up nations, and to hurry them, if required, by thousands to the battle-field and to death. But if so great be the strength of a human idea, what power must not a heaven-descended idea possess, when God opens to it the gates of the heart! The world has not often seen so much power at work; it was seen, however, in the early days of Christianity,

and in the time of the Reformation; and it will be seen in future ages. Men who despised the riches and grandeur of the world, who were contented with a life of sorrow and poverty, began to be moved in favor of all that was holiest upon earth, — the doctrine of faith and of grace. All the religious elements were fermenting beneath the agitated surface of society; and the fire of enthusiasm urged souls to spring forward with courage into this new life, this epoch of renovation, which was so grandly opening before them, and whither Providence was hurrying the nations.