FIRST REFORMS (1521–1522)

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Chapter 1

Progress of the Reformation

For four years an old doctrine had been again proclaimed in the Church.

The great tidings of salvation by grace, published in earlier times in Asia, Greece, and Italy, by Paul and his brethren, and after many ages rediscovered in the Bible by a monk of Wittenberg, had resounded from the plains of Saxony as far as Rome, Paris, and London; and the lofty mountains of Switzerland had re-echoed its powerful accents. The springs of truth, of liberty, and of life, had been re-opened to the human race.

Thither had the nations hastened in crowds, and drunk gladly; but those who had there so eagerly quenched their thirst, were unchanged in appearance. All within was new, and yet everything without seemed to have remained the same.

The constitution of the Church, its ritual, its discipline, had undergone no change. In Saxony, and even at Wittenberg, wherever the new ideas had penetrated, the papal worship continued with its usual pomp; the priest before the altar, offering the host to God, appeared to effect an ineffable transubstantiation; monks and nuns entered the convents and took their eternal vows; the pastors of the flocks lived without families; religious brotherhoods met together; pilgrimages were undertaken; believers hung their votive offerings on the pillars of the chapels; and all the ceremonies, even to the most insignificant observances of the sanctuary, were celebrated as before. There was a new life in the world, but it had not yet created a new body. The language of the priest formed the most striking contrast with his actions. He might be heard thundering from the pulpit against the mass, as being an idolatrous worship; and then might be seen coming down to the altar, and scrupulously performing the pomps of this mystery. In every quarter the new Gospel sounded in the midst of the ancient rites. The priest himself did not perceive this strange contradiction;

and the people, who had admiringly listened to the bold language of the new preachers, devoutly practiced the old observances, as if they were never to lay them aside. Everything remained the same, at the domestic hearth and in social life, as in the house of God. There was a new faith in the world, but not new works. The sun of spring had shone forth, but winter still seemed to bind all nature; there were no flowers, no foliage, nothing outwardly that gave token of the change of season. But these appearances were deceitful; a vigorous sap was circulating unperceived below the surface, and was about to change the aspect of the world.

It is perhaps to this prudent progress that the Reformation is indebted for its triumphs. Every revolution should be accomplished in the mind before it is carried out externally. The inconsistency we have noticed did not even strike Luther at first. It seemed to him quite natural that the people, who read his works with enthusiasm, should remain devoutly attached to the abuses which they assailed. One might almost fancy he had sketched his plan beforehand, and had resolved

to change the mind before changing the forms. But this would be ascribing to him a wisdom the honor of which belongs to a higher Intelligence. He carried out a plan that he had not himself conceived. At a later period he could recognize and discern these things: but he did not imagine them, and did not arrange them so. God led the way: it was Luther's duty to follow.

If Luther had begun by an external reform; if, as soon as he had spoken, he had attempted to abolish monastic vows, the mass, confession, and forms of worship, most assuredly he would have met with a vigorous resistance.

Man requires time to accommodate himself to great revolutions. But Luther was by no means the violent, imprudent, daring innovator that some historians have described. The people, seeing no change in their customary devotions, fearlessly abandoned themselves to their new teacher. They were even surprised at the attacks directed against a man who still left them their mass, their beads, their confessor, and attributed them to the low

jealously of obscure rivals, or to the cruel injustice of powerful adversaries. Yet Luther's opinions agitated their minds, renewed their hearts, and so undermined the ancient edifice that it soon fell of itself, without human agency. Ideas do not act instantaneously; they make their way in silence, like the waters that, filtering behind the rocks of the Alps, loosen them from the mountain on which they rest; suddenly the work done in secret reveals itself, and a single day is sufficient to lay bare the agency of many years, perhaps of many centuries.

A new era was beginning for the Reformation. Already truth was restored in its doctrine; now the doctrine is about to restore truth in all the forms of the Church and of society. The agitation is too great for men's minds to remain fixed and immovable at the point they have attained. Upon those dogmas, now so mightily shaken, were based customs that were already tottering to their fall, and which must disappear with them. There is too much courage and life in the new generation for it to continue silent before error. Sacraments, public worship, hierarchy, vows, constitution, domestic

and public life, — all are about to be modified. The ship, slowly and laboriously constructed, is about to quit the docks and to be launched on the open sea. We shall have to follow its progress through many shoals.

The captivity of the Wartburg separates these two periods. Providence, which was making ready to give so great an impulse to the Reformation, had prepared its progress by leading into profound retirement the instrument destined to effect it. The work seemed for a time buried with the workman; but the seed must be laid in the earth, that it may bring forth fruit; and from this prison, which seemed to be the reformer's tomb, the Reformation was destined to go forth to new conquests, and to spread erelong over the whole world.

Hitherto the Reformation had been centered in the person of Luther. His appearance before the Diet of Worms was doubtless the sublimest day of his life. His character appeared at that time almost spotless; and it is this which has given rise to the observation, that if God, who concealed the

reformer for ten months within the walls of the Wartburg, had that instant removed him for ever from the eyes of the world, his end would have been as an apotheosis. But God designs no apotheosis for his servant; and Luther was preserved to the Church, in order to teach, by his very faults, that the faith of Christians should be based on the Word of God alone. He was transported suddenly far from the stage on which the great revolution of the sixteenth century was taking place; the truth, that for four years he had so powerfully proclaimed, continued in his absence to act upon Christendom: and the work, of which he was but the feeble instrument, henceforward bore the seal not of man, but of God himself.

Germany was moved at Luther’s captivity. The most contradictory rumors were circulated in the provinces. The reformer’s absence excited men’s minds more than his presence could have done. In one place it was said that friends from France had placed him in safety on the other bank of the Rhine; in another, that he had fallen by the dagger of the assassin.

Even in the smallest villages inquiries were made about Luther; travelers were stopped and questioned; and groups collected in the public places. At times some unknown orator would recount in a spiritstirring narrative how the doctor had been carried off; he described the cruel horsemen tying their prisoner's hands, spurring their horses, and dragging him after them on foot, until his strength was exhausted, stopping their ears to his cries, and forcing the blood from his limbs. "Luther's body," added he, "has been seen pierced through and through." As they heard this, the listeners uttered cries of sorrow. "Alas!" said they, "we shall never see or hear that noble-minded man again, whose voice stirred our very hearts!" Luther's friends trembled with indignation, and swore to avenge his death.

Women, children, men of peace, and the aged, beheld with affright the prospect of new struggles. Nothing could equal the alarm of the partisans of Rome. The priests and monks, who at first had not been able to conceal their exultation, thinking

themselves secure of victory because one man was dead, and who had raised their heads with an insulting air of triumph, would now have fled far from the threatening anger of the people. These men, who, while Luther was free, had given the reins to their fury, trembled now that he was a captive. Aleander, especially, was astounded. “The only remaining way of saving ourselves,” wrote a Roman-catholic to the Archbishop of Mentz, “is to light torches and hunt for Luther through the whole world, to restore him to the nation that is calling for him.” One might have said that the pale ghost of the reformer, dragging his chains, was spreading terror around, and calling for vengeance.

“Luther’s death,” exclaimed some, “will cause torrents of blood to be shed.” In no place was there such commotion as in Worms itself; resolute murmurs were heard among both people and princes. Ulrich Hutten and Hermann Busch filled the country with their plaintive strains and songs of battle. Charles V and the nuncios were publicly accused. The nation took up the cause of the poor monk, who, by the strength of his faith, had

become their leader.

At Wittenberg, his colleagues and friends, and especially Melancthon, were at first sunk in the deepest affliction. Luther had imparted to this young scholar the treasures of that holy theology which had from that time wholly occupied his mind. Luther had given substance and life to that purely intellectual cultivation which Melancthon had brought to Wittenberg. The depth of the reformer's teaching had struck the youthful Hellenist, and the doctor's courage in maintaining the rights of the everlasting Gospel against all human authority had filled him with enthusiasm. He had become a partner in his labors; he had taken up the pen, and with that purity of style which he derived from the study of the ancients, he had successively, and with a hand of power, lowered the authority of the fathers and councils before the sovereign Word of God.

Melancthon showed the same decision in his learning that Luther displayed in his actions. Never were there two men of greater diversity, and at the

same time of greater unity. “Scripture,” said Melancthon, “imparts to the soul a holy and marvelous delight: it is the heavenly ambrosia.” — “The Word of God,” exclaimed Luther, “is a sword, a war, a destruction; it falls upon the children of Ephraim like a lioness in the forest.” Thus, one saw in the Scriptures a power to console, and the other a violent opposition against the corruptions of the world. But both esteemed it the greatest thing on earth; and hence they agreed in perfect harmony. “Melancthon,” said Luther, “is a wonder; all men confess it now. He is the most formidable enemy of Satan and the schoolmen, for he knows their foolishness, and Christ the rock. The little Grecian surpasses me even in divinity; he will be as serviceable to you as many Luthers.” And he added that he was ready to abandon any opinion of which Philip did not approve. On his part, too, Melancthon, filled with admiration at Luther’s knowledge of Scripture, set him far above the fathers of the Church. He would make excuses for the jests with which Luther was reproached, and compared him to an earthen vessel that contains a precious treasure beneath its coarse

exterior. “I should be very unwilling to reprove him inconsiderately for this matter,” said Melancthon. But now, these two hearts, so closely united, were separated. These two valiant soldiers can no longer march side by side to the deliverance of the Church. Luther has disappeared; perhaps he is lost forever. The consternation at Wittenberg was extreme: like that of an army, with gloomy and dejected looks, before the blood-stained body of the general who was leading them on to victory.

Suddenly more comforting news arrived. “Our beloved father lives,” exclaimed Philip in the joy of his soul; “take courage and be firm.” But it was not long before their dejection returned. Luther was alive, but in prison. The edict of Worms, with its terrible proscriptions, was circulated by thousands throughout the empire, and even among the mountains of the Tyrol. Would not the Reformation be crushed by the iron hand that was weighing upon it? Melancthon’s gentle spirit was overwhelmed with sorrow.

But the influence of a mightier hand was felt

above the hand of man; God himself deprived the formidable edict of all its strength. The German princes, who had always sought to diminish the power of Rome in the empire, trembled at the alliance between the emperor and the pope, and feared that it would terminate in the destruction of their liberty.

Accordingly, while Charles in his journey through the Low Countries greeted with an ironical smile the burning piles which flatterers and fanatics kindled on the public places with Luther's works, these very writings were read in Germany with a continually increasing eagerness, and numerous pamphlets in favor of the reform were daily inflicting some new blow on the papacy.

The nuncios were distracted at seeing this edict, the fruit of so many intrigues, producing so little effect. "The ink with which Charles V signed his arrest," said they bitterly, "is scarcely dry, and yet the imperial decree is everywhere torn in pieces." The people were becoming more and more attached to the admirable man who, heedless of the

thunders of Charles and of the pope, had confessed his faith with the courage of a martyr. “He offered to retract,” said they, “if he were refuted, and no one dared undertake his task. Does not this prove the truth of his doctrines?” Thus the first movement of alarm was succeeded in Wittenberg and the whole empire by a movement of enthusiasm. Even the Archbishop of Mentz, witnessing this outburst of popular sympathy, dared not give the Cordeliers permission to preach against the reformer. The university, that seemed on the point of being crushed, raised its head. The new doctrines were too firmly established for them to be shaken by Luther’s absence; and the halls of the academy could hardly contain the crowd of hearers.

Chapter 2

Luther in the Wartburg

Meantime the Knight George, for by that name Luther was called in the Wartburg, lived solitary and unknown. “If you were to see me,” wrote he to Melancthon, “you would take me for a soldier, and even you would hardly recognize me.” Luther at first indulged in repose, enjoying a leisure which had not hitherto been allowed him. He wandered freely through the fortress, but could not go beyond the walls. All his wishes were attended to, and he had never been better treated. A crowd of thoughts filled his soul; but none had power to trouble him. By turns he looked down upon the forests that surrounded him, and raised his eyes towards heaven. “A strange prisoner am I,” exclaimed he, “captive with and against my will!” “Pray for me,” wrote he to Spalatin; “your prayers are the only thing I need. I do not grieve for any thing that may be said of me in the world. At last I am at rest.” This letter, as well as many others of the same period, is dated from the island of Patmos. Luther

compared the Wartburg to that celebrated island to which the wrath of Domitian in former times had banished the Apostle John.

In the midst of the dark forests of Thuringia the reformer reposed from the violent struggles that had agitated his soul. There he studied christian truth, not for the purpose of contending, but as a means of regeneration and life.

The beginning of the Reformation was of necessity polemical; new times required new labors. After cutting down the thorns and the thickets, it was requisite to sow the Word of God peaceably in the heart. If Luther had been incessantly called upon to fight fresh battles, he would not have accomplished a durable work in the Church. Thus by his captivity he escaped a danger which might possibly have ruined the Reformation, — that of always attacking and destroying without ever defending or building up.

This humble retreat had a still more precious result. Uplifted by his countrymen, as on a shield,

he was on the verge of the abyss; the least giddiness might have plunged him into it headlong. Some of the first promoters of the Reformation both in Germany and Switzerland, ran upon the shoal of spiritual pride and fanaticism. Luther was a man very subject to the infirmities of our nature, and he was unable to escape altogether from these dangers. The hand of God, however, delivered him for a time, by suddenly removing him from the sphere of intoxicating ovations, and throwing him into an unknown retreat. There his soul was wrapt in pious meditation at God's footstool; it was again tempered in the waters of adversity; its sufferings and humiliation compelled him to walk, for a time at least, with the humble; and the principles of a christian life were thenceforward evolved in his soul with greater energy and freedom.

Luther's calmness was not of long duration. Seated in loneliness on the ramparts of the Wartburg, he remained whole days lost in deep meditation.

At one time the Church appeared before him,

displaying all her wretchedness; at another, directing his eyes hopefully towards heaven, he could exclaim: “Wherefore, O Lord, hast thou made all men in vain?” (Psalm 89:48.) And then, giving way to despair, he cried with dejection: “Alas! there is no one in this latter day of his anger, to stand like a wall before the Lord, and save Israel!” Then recurring to his own destiny, he feared lest he should be accused of deserting the field of battle; and this supposition weighed down his soul. “I would rather,” said he, “be stretched on coals of fire, than lie here half-dead.” Transporting himself in imagination to Worms and Wittenberg, into the midst of his adversaries, he regretted having yielded to the advice of his friends, that he had quitted the world, and that he had not presented his bosom to the fury of men. “Alas!” said he, “there is nothing I desire more than to appear before my cruelest enemies.” Gentler thoughts, however, brought a truce to such anxiety. Everything was not storm and tempest for Luther; from time to time his agitated mind found tranquillity and comfort. Next to the certainty of God’s help, one thing consoled him in his sorrows;

it was the recollection of Melancthon.

“If I perish,” wrote he, “the Gospel will lose nothing: you will succeed me as Elisha did Elijah, with a double portion of my spirit.” But calling to mind Philip’s timidity, he exclaimed with energy: “Minister of the Word! keep the walls and towers of Jerusalem, until you are struck down by the enemy. As yet we stand alone upon the field of battle; after me, they will aim their blows at you.” The thought of the final attack Rome was about to make on the infant Church, renewed his anxieties. The poor monk, solitary and a prisoner, had many a combat to fight alone. But a hope of deliverance speedily dawned upon him. It appeared to him that the assaults of the Papacy would raise the whole German nation, and that the victorious soldiers of the Gospel would surround the Wartburg and restore the prisoner to liberty. “If the pope,” said he, “lays his hand on all those who are on my side, there will be a disturbance in Germany; the greater his haste to crush us, the sooner will come the end of the pope and his followers. And I.....I shall be restored to you. God is awakening the hearts of

many, and stirring up the nations. Only let our enemies clasp our affair in their arms and try to stifle it; it will gather strength under their pressure, and come forth ten times more formidable." But sickness brought him down from those high places on which his courage and his faith had placed him. He had already suffered much at Worms; his disease increased in solitude. He could not endure the food at the Wartburg, which was less course than that of his convent; they were compelled to give him the meager diet to which he had been accustomed.

He passed whole nights without sleep. Anxieties of mind were superadded to the pains of the body. No great work is ever accomplished without suffering and martyrdom. Luther, alone upon his rock, endured in his strong frame a passion that the emancipation of the human race rendered necessary. "Seated by night in my chamber I uttered groans, like a woman in travail; torn, wounded, and bleeding" .....then breaking off his complaints, touched with the thought that his sufferings are a blessing from God, he exclaimed

with love: “Thanks be to Thee, O Christ, that thou wilt not leave me without the precious marks of thy cross!” But soon, growing angry with himself, he cried out: “Madman and hard-hearted that I am! Woe is me! I pray seldom, I seldom wrestle with the Lord, I groan not for the Church of God! Instead of being fervent in spirit, my passions take fire; I live in idleness, in sleep, and indolence!” Then, not knowing to what he should attribute this state, and accustomed to expect everything from the affection of his brethren, he exclaimed in the desolation of his heart: “O my friends! do you then forget to pray for me, that God is thus far from me?” Those who were around him, as well as his friends at Wittenberg and at the elector’s court, were uneasy and alarmed at this state of suffering. They feared lest they should see the life they had rescued from the flames of the pope and the sword of Charles V decline sadly and expire. Was the Wartburg destined to be Luther’s tomb? “I fear,” said Melancthon, “that the grief he feels for the Church will cause his death. A fire has been kindled by him in Israel; if he dies, what hope will remain for us? Would to God, that at the cost of my

own wretched life, I could retain in the world that soul which is its fairest ornament! — Oh! what a man!" exclaimed he, as if already standing on the side of his grave; "we never appreciated him rightly!" What Luther denominated the shameful indolence of his prison was a task that almost exceeded the strength of one man. "I am here all the day," wrote he on the 14th of May, "in idleness and pleasures (alluding doubtless to the better diet that was provided him at first). I am reading the Bible in Hebrew and Greek; I am going to write a treatise in German on Auricular Confession; I shall continue the translation of the Psalms, and compose a volume of sermons, so soon as I have received what I want from Wittenberg. I am writing without intermission." And yet this was but a part of his labors.

His enemies thought that, if he were not dead, at least they should hear no more of him; but their joy was not of long duration, and there could be no doubt that he was alive. A multitude of writings, composed in the Wartburg, succeeded each other rapidly, and the beloved voice of the reformer was

everywhere hailed with enthusiasm. Luther published simultaneously works calculated to edify the Church, and polemical tracts which troubled the too eager exultation of his enemies. For nearly a whole year, he by turns instructed, exhorted, reproved, and thundered from his mountain-retreat; and his amazed adversaries asked one another if there was not something supernatural, some mystery, in this prodigious activity. “He could never have taken any rest,” says Cochloeus. But there was no other mystery than the imprudence of the partisans of Rome. They hastened to take advantage of the edict of Worms, to strike a decisive blow at the Reformation; and Luther, condemned, under the ban of the empire, and a prisoner at Wartburg, undertook to defend the sound doctrine, as if he were still victorious and at liberty. It was especially at the tribunal of penance that the priests endeavored to rivet the chains of their docile parishioners; and accordingly the confessional was the object of Luther’s first attack. “They bring forward,” said he, “these words of St.

James: Confess your faults to one another.

Singular confessor! his name is One Another. Whence it would follow that the confessors should also confess themselves to their penitents; that each Christian should be, in his turn, pope, bishop, priest; and that the pope himself should confess to all!" Luther had scarcely finished this tract when he began another. A theologian of Louvain, by name Latomus, already notorious by his opposition to Reuchlin and Erasmus, had attacked the reformer's opinions. In twelve days Luther's refutation was ready, and it is a masterpiece. He clears himself of the reproach that he was wanting in moderation. "The moderation of the day," said he, "is to bend the knee before sacrilegious pontiffs, impious sophists, and to say to them: Gracious lord! Excellent master! Then, when you have so done, you may put any one you please to death; you may even convulse the world, and you will be none the less a man of moderation.....Away with such moderation! I would rather be frank and deceive no one. The shell may be hard, but the kernel is soft and tender." As Luther's health continued feeble, he thought of leaving the place of his confinement. But how could he manage it? To

appear in public would be exposing his life. The back of the mountain on which the fortress stood was crossed by numerous footways, bordered by tufts of strawberries.

The heavy gate of the castle opened, and the prisoner ventured, not without fear, to gather some fruit. By degrees he grew bolder, and in his knight’s garb began to wander through the surrounding country, attended by one of the guards of the castle, a worthy but somewhat churlish man. One day, having entered an inn, Luther threw aside his sword, which encumbered him, and hastily took up some books that lay there. His nature got the better of his prudence. His guardian trembled for fear this movement, so extraordinary in a soldier, should excite suspicions that the doctor was not really a knight. At another time the two comrades alighted at the convent of Reinhardsbrunn, where Luther had slept a few months before on his road to Worms. Suddenly one of the laybrothers uttered a cry of surprise. Luther was recognized. His attendant perceived it, and dragged him hastily away; and already they were galloping far from the

cloister before the astonished brother had recovered from his amazement.

The military life of the doctor had at intervals something about it truly theological. One day the nets were made ready — the gates of the fortress opened — the long-eared dogs rushed forth. Luther desired to taste the pleasures of the chase. The huntsmen soon grew animated; the dogs sprang forward, driving the game from the covers. In the midst of all this uproar, the Knight George stands motionless: his mind is occupied with serious thoughts; the objects around him fill his heart with sorrow. “Is not this,” says he, “the image of the devil setting on his dogs — that is, the bishops, those representatives of Antichrist, and urging them in pursuit of poor souls?” A young hare was taken: delighted at the prospect of liberating it, he wrapped it carefully in his cloak, and set it down in the midst of a thicket; but hardly had he taken a few steps before the dogs scented the animal and killed it. Luther, attracted by the noise, uttered a groan of sorrow, and exclaimed: O pope! and thou, too, Satan! it is thus ye endeavor to destroy even

those souls that have been saved from death!”

Chapter 3

Commencement of the Reform

While the doctor of Wittenberg, thus dead to the world, was seeking relaxation in these sports in the neighborhood of the Wartburg, the work was going on as if of itself: the Reform was beginning; it was no longer restricted to doctrine, it entered deeply into men’s actions. Bernard Feldkirchen, pastor of Kemberg, the first under Luther’s directions to attack the errors of Rome, was also the first to throw off the yoke of its institutions. He married.

The Germans are fond of social life and domestic joys; and hence, of all the papal ordinances, compulsory celibacy was that which produced the saddest consequences. This law, which had been first imposed on the heads of the clergy, had prevented the ecclesiastical fiefs from becoming hereditary. But when extended by Gregory VII to the inferior clergy, it was attended with the most deplorable results. Many priests had

evaded the obligations imposed upon them by the most scandalous disorders, and had drawn contempt and hatred on the whole body; while those who had submitted to Hildebrand's law were inwardly exasperated against the Church, because, while conferring on its superior dignitaries so much power, wealth, and earthly enjoyment, it bound its humbler ministers, who were its most useful supporters, to a self-denial so contrary to the Gospel.

"Neither popes nor councils," said Feldkirchen and another pastor named Seidler, who had followed his example, "can impose any commandment on the Church that endangers body and soul. The obligation of keeping God's law compels me to violate the traditions of men." The reestablishment of marriage in the sixteenth century was a homage paid to the moral law. The ecclesiastical authority became alarmed, and immediately fulminated its decrees against these two priests. Seidler, who was in the territories of Duke George, was given up to his superiors, and died in prison. But the Elector Frederick refused to

surrender Feldkirchen to the Archbishop of Magdeburg. “His highness,” said Spalatin, “declines to act the part of a constable.” Feldkirchen therefore continued pastor of his flock, although a husband and a father.

The first emotion of the reformer when he heard of this was to give way to exultation: “I admire this new bridegroom of Kemberg,” said he, “who fears nothing, and hastens forward in the midst of the uproar.” Luther was of opinion that priests ought to marry. But this question led to another, — marriage of monks; and here Luther had to support one of those internal struggles of which his whole life was composed; for every reform must first be won by a spiritual struggle. Melancthon and Carlstadt, the one a layman, the other a priest, thought that the liberty of contracting the bonds of wedlock should be as free for the monks as for the priests. The monk Luther did not think so at first. One day the governor of the Wartburg having brought him Carlstadt’s theses on celibacy: “Gracious God!” exclaimed he, “our Wittenbergers then will give wives even to the

monks!".....This thought surprised and confounded him; his heart was troubled. He rejected for himself the liberty that he claimed for others.

"Ah!" said he indignantly, "they will not force me at least to take a wife." This expression is doubtless unknown to those who assert that Luther preached the Reformation that he might marry. Inquiring for truth, not with passion, but with uprightness of purpose, he maintained what seemed to him true, although contrary to the whole of his system. He walked in a mixture of error and truth, until error had fallen and truth remained alone.

There was, indeed, a great difference between the two questions. The marriage of priests was not the destruction of the priesthood; on the contrary, this of itself might restore to the secular clergy the respect of the people; but the marriage of monks was the downfall of monachism. It became a question, therefore, whether it was desirable to disband and break up that powerful army which the popes had under their orders. "Priests," wrote Luther to Melancthon, "are of divine appointment,

and consequently are free as regards human commandments. But of their own free will the monks adopted celibacy; they are not therefore at liberty to withdraw from the yoke they voluntarily imposed on themselves." The reformer was destined to advance, and carry by a fresh struggle this new position of the enemy. Already had he trodden under foot a host of Roman abuses, and even Rome herself; but monachism still remained standing. Monachism, that had once carried life into so many deserts, and which, passing through so many centuries, was now filling the cloisters with sloth and often with licentiousness, seemed to have embodied itself and gone to defend its rights in that castle of Thuringia, where the question of its life and death was discussed in the conscience of one man. Luther struggled with it: at one moment he was on the point of gaining the victory, at another he was nearly overcome.

At length, unable longer to maintain the contest, he flung himself in prayer at the feet of Jesus Christ, exclaiming: "Teach us, deliver us, establish us, by Thy mercy, in the liberty that

belongs to us; for of a surety we are thy people!” He had not long to wait for deliverance; an important revolution was effected in the reformer’s mind; and again it was the doctrine of justification by faith that gave him victory. That arm which had overthrown the indulgences, the practices of Rome, and the pope himself, also wrought the downfall of the monks in Luther’s mind and throughout Christendom. Luther saw that monachism was in violent opposition to the doctrine of salvation by grace, and that a monastic life was founded entirely on the pretended merits of man. Feeling convinced, from that hour, that Christ’s glory was interested in this question, he heard a voice incessantly repeating in his conscience: “Monachism must fall!” — “So long as the doctrine of justification by faith remains pure and undefiled in the Church, no one can become a monk,” said he. This conviction daily grew stronger in his heart, and about the beginning of September he sent “to the bishops and deacons of the Church of Wittenberg,” the following theses, which were his declaration of war against a monastic life: — “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

“Whosoever maketh a vow of virginity, chastity, of service to God without faith, maketh an impious and idolatrous vow, — a vow to the devil himself.

“To make such vows is worse than the priests of Cybele or the vestals of the pagans; for the monks make their vows in the thought of being justified and saved by these vows; and what ought to be ascribed solely to the mercy of God, is thus attributed to meritorious works.

“We must utterly overthrow such convents, as being the abodes of the devil.

“There is but one order that is holy and makes man holy, and that is Christianity or faith. “For convents to be useful they should be converted into schools, where children should be brought up to man’s estate; instead of which they are houses where adult men become children, and remain so for ever.” We see that Luther would still have tolerated convents as places of education; but

erelong his attacks against these establishments became more violent. The immorality and shameful practices that prevailed in the cloisters recurred forcibly to his thoughts. “I am resolved,” wrote he to Spalatin on the 11th of November, “to deliver the young from the hellish fires of celibacy.” He now wrote a book against monastic vows, which he dedicated to his father: — “Do you desire,” said he in his dedication to the old man at Mansfeldt, “do you still desire to rescue me from a monastic life?

You have the right, for you are still my father, and I am still your son. But that is no longer necessary: God has been beforehand with you, and has Himself delivered me by his power. What matters it whether I wear or lay aside the tonsure and the cowl? Is it the cowl — is it the tonsure — that makes the monk? All things are yours, says St. Paul, and you are Christ’s. I do not belong to the cowl, but the cowl to me. I am a monk, and yet not a monk; I am a new creature, not of the pope, but of Jesus Christ. Christ, alone and without any go-between, is my bishop, my abbot, my prior, my

lord, my father, and my master; and I know no other. What matters it to me if the pope should condemn me and put me to death? He cannot call me from the grave and kill me a second time.....The great day is drawing near in which the kingdom of abominations shall be overthrown. Would to God that it were worth while for the pope to put us all to death! Our blood would cry out to heaven against him, and thus his condemnation would be hastened, and his end be near." The transformation had already been effected in Luther himself; he was no longer a monk. It was not outward circumstances, or earthly passions, or carnal precipitation that had wrought this change. There had been a struggle: at first Luther had taken the side of monachism; but truth also had gone down into the lists, and monachism had fallen before it. The victories that passion gains are ephemeral; those of truth are lasting and decisive.

Chapter 4

Archbishop Albert

While Luther was thus preparing the way for one of the greatest revolutions that were destined to be effected in the Church, and the Reformation was beginning to enter powerfully into the lives of Christians, the Romish partisans, blind as those generally are who have long been in possession of power, imagined that, because Luther was in the Wartburg, The Reform was dead and forever extinct; and fancied they should be able quietly to resume their ancient practices, that had been for a moment disturbed by the monk of Wittenberg. Albert, elector-archbishop of Mentz, was one of those weak men who, all things being equal, decide for the truth; but who, as soon as their interest is put in the balance, are ready to take part with error. His most important aim was to have a court as brilliant as that of any prince in Germany, his equipages as rich, and his table as well furnished: the traffic in indulgences served admirable to obtain this result. Accordingly, the decree against

Luther had scarcely issued from the imperial chancery, before Albert, who was then residing with his court at Halle, summoned the vendors of indulgences, who were still alarmed at the words of the reformer, and endeavored to encourage them by such language as this: “Fear nothing, we have silenced him; let us begin to shear the flock in peace; the monk is a prisoner; he is confined by bolts and bars; this time he will be very clever if he comes again to disturb us in our affairs.” The market was reopened, the merchandise was displayed for sale, and against the churches of Halle re-echoed with the speeches of the mountebanks.

But Luther was still alive, and his voice was powerful enough to pass beyond the walls and gratings behind which he had been hidden. Nothing could have roused his indignation to a higher pitch. What! the most violent battles have been fought; he has confronted every danger; the truth remained victorious, and yet they dare trample it under foot, as if it had been vanquished!.....That voice shall again be heard, which has once already put an end

to this criminal traffic. “I shall enjoy no rest,” wrote he to Spalatin, “until I have attacked the idol of Mentz with its brothel at Halle.” Luther set to work immediately; he cared little about the mystery with which some sought to envelop his residence in the Wartburg. He was like Elijah in the desert forging fresh thunderbolts against the impious Ahab.

On the first of November he finished his treatise Against the New Idol of Halle.

Intelligence of Luther’s plans reached the archbishop. Alarmed and in emotion at the very idea, he sent about the middle of October two of his attendants (Capito and Auerbach) to Wittenberg to avert the storm.

“Luther must moderate his impetuosity,” said they to Melancthon, who received them cordially. But Melancthon, although mild himself, was not one of those who imagine that wisdom consists in perpetual concession, tergiversation, and silence. “It is God who moves him,” replied he, “and our

age needs a bitter and pungent salt.” Upon this Capito turned to Jonas, and endeavored through him to act upon the court. The news of Luther’s intention was already known there, and produced great amazement. “What!” said the courtiers: “rekindle the fire that we have had so much trouble to extinguish! Luther can only be saved by being forgotten, and yet he is rising up against the first prince in the empire!” — “I will not suffer Luther to write against the Archbishop of Mentz, and thus disturb the public tranquillity,” said the elector. Luther was annoyed when these words were repeated to him. Is it not enough to imprison his body, but they will also enchain his mind, and the truth with it?.....Do they fancy that he hides himself through fear, and that his retirement is an avowal of defeat? He maintains that it is a victory.

Who dared stand up against him at Worms and oppose the truth?

Accordingly when the captive in the Wartburg had read the chaplain’s letter, informing him of the prince’s sentiments, he flung it aside, determined to

make no reply. But he could not long contain himself; he took up the epistle and wrote to Spalatin: “The elector will not suffer!.....and I too will not suffer the elector not to permit me to write.....Rather would I destroy yourself, the elector, nay, the whole world for ever! If I have resisted the pope, who is the creator of your cardinal, why should I give way before his creature? It is very fine, forsooth, to hear you allow the everlasting peace of God to be disturbed!.....Spalatin, it shall not be so! Prince, it shall not be so! I send you a book I had already prepared against the cardinal when I received your letter: Forward it to Melancthon.” Spalatin trembled as he read this manuscript; again he represented to the reformer how imprudent it would be to publish a work that would force the imperial government to lay aside its apparent ignorance of Luther’s fate, and punish a prisoner who dared attack the greatest prince in the empire and the Church. If Luther persevered in his designs, the tranquillity would again be disturbed, and the Reformation perhaps be lost. Luther consented to delay the publication of his treatise;

he even permitted Melancthon to erase the most violent passages. But, irritated at his friend's timidity, he wrote to the chaplain: "The Lord lives and reigns, that Lord in whom you court-folks do not believe, unless he so accommodate His works to your reason, that there is no longer any necessity to believe." He then resolved to write direct to the cardinal.

It is the whole body of Romish bishops that Luther thus brings to the bar in the person of the German primate. His words are those of a bold man, ardent in zeal for the truth, and who feels that he is speaking in the name of God himself.

"Your electoral highness," wrote he from the depth of the retreat in which he was hidden, "has set up again in Halle the idol that swallows the money and the souls of poor Christians. You think, perhaps, that I am disabled, and that the emperor will easily stifle the cries of the poor monk.....But know that I shall discharge the duties that christian charity has imposed upon me, without fearing the gates of hell, and much less the pope, his bishops,

and cardinals.

“For this reason my humble prayer is, that your electoral highness would remember the beginning of this affair — how a tiny spark kindled a terrible conflagration. All the world was at that time in a state of security. This poor begging friar (thought they), who unaided would attack the pope, is too weak for such an undertaking. But God interposed; and he caused the pope more labor and anxiety than he had ever felt since he had taken his place in the temple of God to tyrannize over the Church. This same God still lives: let none doubt it. He will know how to withstand a cardinal of Mentz, even were he supported by four emperors; for He is pleased above all things to hew down the lofty cedars and to abase the haughty Pharaohs.

“For this reason I inform your highness by letter, that if the idol is not thrown down, I must, in obedience to God’s teaching, publicly attack your highness, as I have attacked the pope himself. Let your highness conduct yourself in accordance with this advice; I shall wait a fortnight for an early and

favorable reply. Given in my wilderness, the Sunday after St. Catherine’s day, (15th November) 1521.

“From your electoral highness’s devoted and obedient servant, Martin Luther.” This letter was sent to Wittenberg, and from Wittenberg to Halle, where the cardinal-elector was then residing; for no one dared intercept it, foreseeing the storm that would be aroused by so daring an act. But Melancthon accompanied it by a letter addressed to the prudent Capito, in which he endeavored to prepare the way for a favorable termination of this difficult business.

It is impossible to describe the feelings of the youthful and weak archbishop on receiving the reformer’s letter. The work announced against the idol of Halle was like a sword suspended over his head, And, at the same time, what anger must have been kindled in his heart by the insolence of his peasant’s son, — this excommunicated monk, who dared make use of such language to a prince of the house of Brandenburg, — the primate of the

German Church? Capito besought the archbishop to satisfy the monk.

Alarm, pride, and the voice of conscience which he could not stifle, struggled fearfully in Albert's bosom. At last dread of the book, and perhaps remorse also, prevailed; he humbled himself: he put together all he thought calculated to appease the man of the Wartburg, and a fortnight had barely elapsed when Luther received the following letter, still more astonishing than his own terrible epistle: — "My dear Doctor, — I have received and read your letter, and have taken it in good part. But I think the motive that has led you to write me such an epistle has long ceased to exist. I desire, with God's help, to conduct myself as a pious bishop and a christian prince, and I confess my need of the grace of God. I do not deny that I am a sinner, liable to sin and error, sinning and erring daily. I am well assured that without God's grace I am worthless and offensive mire, even as other men, if not more so. In replying to your letter, I would not conceal this gracious disposition; for I am more than desirous of showing you all kindness

and favor, for love of Christ. I know how to receive a christian and fraternal rebuke.

“With my own hand. Albert.” Such was the language addressed to the excommunicated monk of the Wartburg by the Elector-archbishop of Mentz and Magdeburg, commissioned to represent and maintain in Germany the constitution of the Church. Did Albert, is writing it, obey the generous impulses of his conscience, or his slavish fears? In the first case, it is a noble letter; in the second, it merits our contempt. We would rather suppose it originated in the better feelings of his heart. However that may be, it shows the immeasurable superiority of God’s servants over all the great ones of the earth. While Luther alone, a prisoner and condemned, derived invincible courage from his faith, the archbishop, elector and cardinal, environed with all the power and favors of the world, trembled on his throne. This contrast appears continually, and is the key to the strange enigma offered by the history of the Reformation. The Christian is not called upon to count his forces, and to number his means of victory. The only thing

he should be anxious about is to know whether the cause he upholds is really that of God, and whether he looks only to his Master’s glory.

Unquestionably he has an inquiry to make; but this is wholly spiritual, — the Christian looks at the heart, and not the arm; he weighs the justice of his cause, and not its outward strength. And when this question is once settled, his path is clear. He must move forward boldly, were it even against the world and all its armed hosts, in the unshaken conviction that God himself will fight for him.

The enemies of the Reformation thus passed from extreme severity to extreme weakness; they had already done the same at Worms; and these sudden transitions are of continual occurrence in the battle that error wages against truth. Every cause destined to fall is attacked with an internal uneasiness which makes it tottering and uncertain, and drives it by turns from one pole to the other. Steadiness of purpose and energy are far better; they would thus perhaps precipitate its fall, but at least if it did fall it would fall with glory.

One of Albert’s brothers, Joachim I, elector of Brandenburg, gave an example of that strength of character which is so rare, particularly in our own times. Immovable in his principles, firm in action, knowing how to resist when necessary the encroachments of the pope, he opposed an iron hand to the progress of the Reformation. At Worms he had insisted that Luther should not be heard, and that he ought to be punished as a heretic, in despite of his safe-conduct. Scarcely had the edict of Worms been issued, when he ordered that it should be strictly enforced throughout his states. Luther could appreciate so energetic a character, and making a distinction between Joachim and his other adversaries, he said: “We may still pray for the Elector of Brandenburg.” The disposition of this prince seemed to have been communicated to his people. Berlin and Brandenburg long remained closed against the Reformation. But what is received slowly is held faithfully. While other countries, which then hailed the Gospel with joy, — Belgium for instance, and Westphalia, — were soon to abandon it, Brandenburg, the last of the

German states to enter on the narrow way of faith, was destined in after-years to stand in the foremost ranks of the Reformation.

Luther did not read Cardinal Albert’s letter without a suspicion that it was dictated by hypocrisy, and in accordance with the advice of Capito. He kept silence, however, being content with declaring to the latter, that so long as the archbishop, who was hardly capable of managing a small parish, did not lay aside his cardinal’s mask and episcopal pomp, and become a simple minister of the Word, it was impossible that he could be in the way of salvation.

Chapter 5

Translation of the Bible

While Luther was thus struggling against error, as if he were still in the midst of the battle, he was also laboring in his retirement of the Wartburg, as if he had no concern in what was going on in the world. The hour has come in which the Reformation, from being a mere theological question, was to become the life of the people; and yet the great engine by which this progress was to be effected was not yet in being. This powerful and mighty instrument, destined to hurl its thunderbolts from every side against the proud edifice of Rome, throw down its walls, cast off the enormous weight of the papacy under which the Church lay stifled, and communicate an impulse to the whole human race which would not be lost until the end of time, — this instrument was to go forth from the old castle of the Wartburg, and enter the world on the same day that terminated the reformer's captivity.

The farther the Church was removed from the

time when Jesus, the true Light of the world, was on the earth, the greater was her need of the torch of God's Word, ordained to transmit the brightness of Jesus Christ to the men of the latter days. But this Divine Word was at that time hidden from the people. Several unsuccessful attempts at translation from the Vulgate had been made in,, and in 1518; they were almost unintelligible, and from their high price beyond the reach of the people. It had even been prohibited to give the German Church the Bible in the vulgar tongue. Besides which, the number of those who were able to read did not become considerable until there existed in the German language a book of lively and universal interest.

Luther was called to present his nation with the Scriptures of God. That same God who had conducted St. John to Patmos, there to write his revelation, had confined Luther in the Wartburg, there to translate His Word. This great task, which it would have been difficult for him to have undertaken in the midst of the cares and occupations of Wittenberg, was to establish the

new building on the primitive rock, and, after the lapse of so many ages, lead Christians back from the subtleties of the schoolmen to the pure foundation-head of redemption and salvation.

The wants of the Church spoke loudly; they called for this great work; and Luther, by his own inward experience, was to be led to perform it. In truth, he discovered in faith that repose of the souls which his agitated conscience and his monastic ideas had long induced him to seek in his own merits and holiness. The doctrine of the Church, the scholastic theology, knew nothing of the consolations that proceed from faith; but the Scriptures proclaim them with great force, and there it was that he had found them. Faith in the Word of God had made him free. By it he felt emancipated from the dogmatical authority of the Church, from its hierarchy and traditions, from the opinions of the schoolmen, the power of prejudice, and from every human ordinance. Those strong and numerous bonds which for centuries had enchained and stifled Christendom, were snapped asunder, broken in pieces, and scattered round him; and he

nobly raised his head freed from all authority except that of the Word. This independence of man, this submission to God, which he had learned in the Holy Scriptures, he desired to impart to the Church. But before he could communicate them, it was necessary to set before it the revelations of God. A powerful hand was wanted to unlock the massive gates of that arsenal of God's Word from which Luther had taken his arms, and to open to the people against the day of battle those vaults and antique halls which for many ages no foot had ever trod.

Luther had already translated several fragments of the Holy Scripture; the seven penitential Psalms had been his first task. John the Baptist, Christ himself, and the Reformation had begun alike by calling men to repentance. It is the principle of every regeneration in the individual man, and in the whole human race. These essays had been eagerly received; men longed to have more; and this voice of the people was considered by Luther as the voice of God himself. He resolved to reply to the call. He was a prisoner within those lofty walls;

what of that! he will devote his leisure to translating the Word of God into the language of his countrymen.

Erelong this Word will be seen descending from the Wartburg with him; circulating among the people of Germany, and putting them in possession of those spiritual treasures hitherto shut up within the hearts of a few pious men. “Would that this one book,” exclaimed Luther, “were in every language, in every hand before the eyes, and in the ears and hearts of all men!” Admirable words, which, after a lapse of three centuries, as illustrious body, translating the Bible into the mother-tongue of every nation upon earth, has undertaken to realize “Scripture without any comment,” said he again, “is the sun whence all teachers receive their light.” Such are the principles of Christianity and of the Reformation. According to these venerable words, we should not consult the Fathers to throw light upon Scripture, but Scripture to explain the Fathers. The reformers and the apostles set up the Word of God as the only light, as they exalt the sacrifice of Christ as the only righteousness with

this perfect righteousness of Christ, we vitiate both the foundations of Christianity. These are the two fundamental heresies of Rome, and which, although doubtless in a smaller degree, some teachers were desirous of introducing into the bosom of the Reformation.

Luther opened the Greek originals of the evangelists and apostles, and undertook the difficult task of making these divine teachers speak his mother tongue. Important crisis in the history of the Reformation! from that time the Reformation was no longer in the hands of the reformer. The Bible came forward; Luther withdrew. God appeared, and man disappeared. The reformer placed THE BOOK in the hands of his contemporaries. Each one may now hear the voice of God for himself; as for Luther, henceforth he mingles with the crowd, and takes his station in the ranks of those who come to draw from the common fountain of light and life.

In translating the Holy Scriptures, Luther found that consolation and strength, of which he stood so

much in need. Solitary, in ill health, and saddened by the exertions of his enemies and the extravagances of some of his followers, — seeing his life wearing away in the gloom of that old castle, he had occasionally to endure terrible struggles. In those times, men were inclined to carry into the visible world the conflicts that the soul sustains with its spiritual enemies; Luther's lively imagination easily embodied the emotions of his heart, and the superstitions of the Middle Ages had still some hold upon his mind, so that we might say of him, as it has been said of Calvin with regard to the punishment inflicted on heretics: there was yet a remnant of popery in him. Satan was not in Luther's view simply an invisible though real being; he thought that this adversary of God appeared to men as he had appeared to Jesus Christ. Although the authenticity of many of the stories on this subject contained in the Tabletalk and elsewhere is more than doubtful, history must still record this failing in the reformer. Never was he more assailed by these gloomy ideas than in the solitude of the Wartburg. In the days of his strength he had braved the devil at Worms; but now all the

reformer’s powers seemed broken and his glory tarnished. He was thrown aside; Satan was victorious in his turn, and in the anguish of his soul Luther imagined he saw his giant form standing before him, lifting his finger in threatening attitude, exulting with a bitter and hellish sneer, and gnashing his teeth in fearful rage. One day especially, it is said, as Luther was engaged on his translation of the New Testament, he fancied he beheld Satan, filled with horror at his work, tormenting him, and prowling round him like a lion about to spring upon his prey. Luther, alarmed and incensed, snatched up his inkstand and flung it at the head of his enemy. The figure disappeared, and the missile was dashed in pieces against the wall. Luther’s sojourn in the Wartburg began to be insupportable to him. He felt indignant at the timidity of his protectors. Sometimes he would remain a whole day plunged in deep and silent meditation, and awakened from it only to exclaim, “Oh, that I were at Wittenberg!” At length he could hold out no longer; there has been caution enough; he must see his friends again, hear them, and converse with them. True, he runs the risk of

falling into the hands of his enemies, but nothing can stop him. About the end of November, he secretly quitted the Wartburg, and set out for Wittenberg.

A fresh storm had just burst upon him. At last the Sorbonne had spoken out. That celebrated school of Paris, the first authority in the Church after the pope, the ancient and venerable source whence theological teaching had proceeded, had given its verdict against the Reformation.

The following are some of the propositions condemned by this learned body. Luther had said, “God ever pardons and remits sins gratuitously, and requires nothing of us in return, except that in future we should live according to righteousness.” And he had added, “Of all deadly sins, this is the most deadly, namely, that any one should think he is not guilty of a damnable and deadly sin before God.” He had said in another place, “Burning heretics is contrary to the will of the Holy Ghost.” To these three propositions, and to many others besides, which they quoted, the theological faculty

of Paris replied, “Heresy! — let him be accursed!” But a young man, twenty-four years of age, of short stature, diffident, and plain in appearance, dared take up the gauntlet which the first college in the world had thrown down. They knew pretty well at Wittenberg what should be thought of these pompous censures; they knew that Rome had yielded to the suggestions of the Dominicans, and that the Sorbonne was led away by two or three fanatical doctors who were designated at Paris by satirical nicknames. Accordingly, in his Apology, Melancthon did not confine himself to defending Luther; but, with that boldness which characterizes his writings, he carried the war into the enemy’s camp. “You say he is a Manichean! — he is a Montanist! — let fire and faggot repress his foolishness! And who is Montanist? Luther, who would have us believe in Holy Scripture alone, or you, who would have men believe in the opinions of their fellow-creatures rather than in the Word of God?” To ascribe more importance to the word of a man than to the Word of God was in very truth the heresy of Montanus, as it still is that of the pope and of all those who set the hierarchical authority

of the Church or the interior inspirations of mysticism far above the positive declarations of the Sacred Writings. Accordingly the youthful masters of arts, who had said, “I would rather lay down my life than my faith,” did not stop there.

He accused the Sorbonne of having obscured the Gospel, extinguished faith, and substituted an empty philosophy in the place of Christianity.

After this work of Melancthon’s, the position of the dispute was changed; he proved unanswerably that the heresy was at Paris and Rome, and the catholic truth at Wittenberg.

Meanwhile Luther, caring little for the condemnations of the Sorbonne, was proceeding in his military equipment to the university. He was greatly distressed by various reports which reached him on the road of a spirit of impatience and independence that was showing itself among some of his adherents. At length he arrived at Wittenberg without being recognized, and stopped at Amsdorff’s house. Immediately all his friends were

secretly called together; and Melancthon among the first, who had so often said, “I would rather die than lose him.” They came! — What a meeting! — what joy! — The captive of the Wartburg tasted in their society all the sweetness of christian friendship. He learnt the spread of the Reformation, the hopes of his brethren; and, delighted at what he saw and heard, offered up a prayer, — returned thanks to God, — and then with brief delay returned to the Wartburg.

Chapter 6

Fresh Reforms

Luther’s joy was well founded. The work of the Reformation then made a great stride. Feldkirchen, always in the van, had led the assault; now the main body was in motion, and that power which carried the Reformation from the doctrine it had purified into the worship, life, and constitution of the Church, now manifested itself by a new explosion, more formidable to the papacy than even the first had been.

Rome, having got rid of the reformer, thought the heresy was at and end.

But in a short time everything was changed. Death removed from the pontifical throne the man who had put Luther under the ban of the Church.

Disturbances occurred in Spain, and compelled Charles to visit his kingdom beyond the Pyrenees. War broke out between this prince and Francis I,

and as if that were not enough to occupy the emperor, Soliman made an incursion into Hungary, Charles, thus attacked on all sides, was forced to forget the monk of Worms and his religious innovations.

About the same time, the vessel of the Reformation, which, driven in every direction by contrary winds, was on the verge of foundering, righted itself, and floated proudly above the waters.

It was in the convent of the Augustines at Wittenberg that the Reformation broke out. We ought not to feel surprise at this: it is true the reformer was there no longer; but no human power could drive out the spirit that had animated him.

For some time the Church in which Luther had so often preached reechoed with strange doctrines. Gabriel Zwilling, a zealous monk and chaplain to the convent, was there energetically proclaiming the Reformation. As if Luther, whose name was at that time everywhere celebrated, had become too strong and too illustrious, God selected feeble and

obscure men to begin the Reformation which that renowned doctor had prepared. “Jesus Christ,” said the preacher, “instituted the sacrament of the altar in remembrance of his death, and not to make it an object of adoration. To worship it is a real idolatry. The priest who communicates alone commits a sin. No prior has the right to compel a monk to say mass alone. Let one, two, or three officiate, and let the others receive the Lord’s sacrament under both kinds.” This is what Friar Gabriel required, and this daring language was listened to approvingly by the other brethren, and particularly by those who came from the Low Countries. They were disciples of the Gospel, and why should they not conform in everything to its commands? Had not Luther himself written to Melancthon in the month of August: “Henceforth and for ever I will say no more private masses?” Thus the monks, the soldiers of the hierarchy, emancipated by the Word, boldly took part against Rome.

At Wittenberg they met with a violent resistance from the prior. Calling to mind that all things should be done with order, they gave way,

but with a declaration that to uphold the mass was to oppose the Gospel of God.

The prior had gained the day: one man had been stronger than them all. It might seem, therefore, that this movement of the Augustines was one of those caprices of insubordination so frequently occurring in monasteries.

But it was in reality the Spirit of God itself which was then agitating all Christendom. A solitary cry, uttered in the bosom of a convent, found its echo in a thousand voices and that which men would have desired to confine within the walls of a cloister, went forth and took a bodily form in the very midst of the city.

Rumors of the dissensions among the friars soon spread through the town.

The citizens and students of the university took part, some with, some against the mass. The elector’s court was troubled. Frederick in surprise sent his chancellor Pontanus to Wittenberg with

orders to reduce the monks to obedience, by putting them, if necessary, on bread and water; and on the 12th of October, at seven in the morning, a deputation from the professors, of which Melancthon formed a part, visited the convent, exhorting the brothers to attempt no innovations, or at least to wait a little longer. Upon this all their zeal revived: as they were unanimous in their faith, except the prior who combated them, they appealed to Scripture, to the understanding of believers, and to the conscience of the theologians; and two days after handed in a written declaration.

The doctors now examined the question more closely, and found that the monks had truth on their side. They had gone to convince, and were convinced themselves. What ought they to do? their consciences cried aloud; their anxiety kept increasing: at last, after long hesitation, they formed a courageous resolution.

On the 20th of October, the university made their report to the elector.

“Let your electoral highness,” said they, after setting forth the errors of the mass, “put an end to every abuse, lest Christ in the day of judgment should rebuke us as he did the people of Capernaum.” This it is no longer a few obscure monks who are speaking; it is that university which for several years has been hailed by all the wise as the school of the nation; and the very means employed to check the Reformation are those which will now contribute to its extension.

Melancthon, with that boldness which he carried into learning, published fifty-five propositions calculated to enlighten men’s minds.

Melancthon said, “Just as looking at a cross is not performing a good work, but simply contemplating a sign that reminds us of Christ’s death; “Just as looking at the sun is not performing a good work, but simply contemplating a sign that reminds us of Christ and of his Gospel; “So, partaking of the Lord’s Supper is not performing a good work, but simply making use of a sign that reminds us of the grace that has been given us

through Christ.

“But here is the difference, namely, that the symbols invented by men simply remind us of what they signify; while the signs given us by God, not only remind us of the things themselves, but assure our hearts of the will of God. “As the sight of a cross does not justify, so the mass does not justify.

“As the sight of a cross is not a sacrifice either for our sins or for the sins of others, so the mass is not a sacrifice.

“There is but one sacrifice, — but one satisfaction, — Jesus Christ.

Besides him, there is none.

“Let such bishops as do not oppose the impiety of the mass be accursed.” Thus spoke the pious and gentle Philip.

The elector was amazed. He had desired to

reduce some young friars, — and now the whole university, Melancthon himself, rose in their defense.

To wait seemed to him in all things the surest means of success. He did not like sudden reforms, and desired that every opinion should make its way without obstruction. “Time alone,” thought he, “clears up all things and brings them to maturity.” And yet in spite of him the Reformation was advancing with haste steps, and threatened to carry everything along with it. Frederick made every exertion to arrest its progress. His authority, the influence of his character, the reasons thus appeared to him the most convincing, were all set in operation. “Do not be too hasty,” said he to the theologians: “your number is too small to carry such a reform. If it is based upon the Gospel, others will discover it also, and you will put an end to the abuses with the aid of the whole Church. Talk, debate, preach on these matters as much as you like, but keep up with the ancient usages.” Such was the battle fought on the subject of the mass. The monks had bravely led the assault; the

theologians, undecided for a moment, had soon come to their support. The prince and his ministers alone defended the place. It has been asserted that the Reformation was accomplished by the power and authority of the elector; but far from that, the assailants shrunk back at the sound of his voice, and the mass was saved for a few days.

The heat of the attack had been already directed against another point.

Friar Gabriel still continued his heart-stirring sermons in the church of the Augustines. Monachism was now the object of his reiterated blows; if the mass was the stronghold of the Roman doctrines, the monastic orders were the support of her hierarchy. These, then, were the two first positions that must be carried.

“No one,” said Gabriel, according to the prior’s report, “no dweller in the convents keeps the commandments of God; no one can be saved under a cowl; every man that enters a cloister enters it in the name of the devil. The vows of chastity,

poverty, and obedience, are contrary to the Gospel.” This extraordinary language was reported to the prior, who avoided going to church for fear he should hear it.

“Gabriel,” said they, “desires that every exertion should be made to empty the cloisters. He says if a monk is met in the streets, the people should pull him by the frock and laugh at him; and that if they cannot be driven out of the convents by ridicule, they should be expelled by force. Break open, pull down, utterly destroy the monasteries (says he), so that not a single trace of them may remain; and that not one of those stones that have contributed to shelter so much sloth and superstition may be found in the spot they so long occupied.” The friars were astonished; their consciences told them that Gabriel’s words were but too true, that a monkish life was not in conformity with the will of God, and that no one could dispose of their persons better than themselves.

Thirteen Augustines quitted the convent

together, and laying aside the costume of their order, assumed a lay dress. Those who possessed any learning attended the lectures of the university, in order one day to be serviceable to the Church; and those whose minds were uncultivated, endeavored to gain a livelihood by the work of their own hands, according to the injunctions of the apostle, and the example of the good citizens of Wittenberg. One of them, who understood the business of a joiner, applied for the freedom of the city and resolved to take a wife.

If Luther’s entry into the Augustine convent at Erfurth had been the germ of the Reformation, the departure of these thirteen monks from the convent of the Augustines at Wittenberg was the signal of its entering into possession of Christendom. For thirty years past Erasmus had been 806 unveiling the uselessness, the folly, and the vices of the monks; and all Europe laughed and grew angry with him; but sarcasm was required no longer. Thirteen high-minded and bold men returned into the midst of the world, to render themselves profitable to society and fulfill the commandments

of God. Feldkirchen's marriage had been the first defeat of the hierarchy; the emancipation of these thirteen Augustines was the second. Monachism, which had arisen at the time when the Church entered upon its period of enslavement and error, was destined to fall at the dawning of liberty and truth.

This daring step excited universal ferment in Wittenberg. Admiration was felt towards those men who thus came to take their part in the general labors, and they were received as brethren. At the same time a few outcries were heard against those who persisted in remaining lazily sheltered behind the walls of their monastery. The monks who remained faithful to their prior trembled in their cells; and the latter, carried away by the general movement, stopped the celebration of the low masses.

The smallest concession in so critical a moment of necessity precipitated the course of events. The prior's order created a great sensation in the town and university, and produced a sudden explosion.

Among the students and citizens of Wittenberg were found some of those turbulent men whom the least excitement arouses and hurries into criminal disorders.

They were exasperated at the idea of the low masses, which even the superstitious prior had suspended, still being said in the parish church; and on Tuesday the 3rd of December, as the mass was about to be read they ran up to the altars, took away the books, and drove the priests out of the chapel. The council and university were annoyed, and met to punish the authors of these misdeeds. But the passions once aroused are not easily quelled. The Cordeliers had not taken part in this movement of the Augustines. On the following day, the students posted a threatening placard on the gates of their convent; after that forty students entered their church, and although they refrained from violence, they ridiculed the monks, so that the latter dared not say mass except in the choir. Towards evening the fathers were told to be upon their guard: “The students (it was said) are resolved to attack the monastery!” The frightened

religioners, not knowing how to shelter themselves from these real or supposed attacks, hastily besought the council to protect them; a guard of soldiers was sent, but the enemy did not appear. The university caused the students who had taken part in these disturbances to be arrested. It was discovered that some were from Erfurth, where they had become notorious for their insubordination. The penalties of the university were inflicted upon them.

And yet the necessity was felt of inquiring carefully into the lawfulness of monastic vows. A chapter of Augustine monks from Misnia and Thuringia assembled at Wittenberg in the month of December. They came to the same opinion as Luther. On the one hand they declared that monastic vows were not criminal, but on the other that they were not obligatory.

“In Christ,” said they, “there is neither layman nor monk; each one is at liberty to quit the monastery or to stay in it. Let him who goes forth beware lest he abuse his liberty; let him who

remains obey his superiors, but through love." They next abolished mendicancy and the saying of masses for money; they also decreed that the best instructed among them should devote themselves to the teaching of the Word of God, and that the rest should support their brethren by the work of their own hands. Thus the question of vows appeared settled; but that of the mass was undecided. The elector still resisted the torrent, and protected an institution which he saw standing in all Christendom. The orders of so indulgent a prince could not long restrain the public feeling. Carlstadt's head in particular was turning in the midst of the general ferment. Zealous, upright, and bold, ready, like Luther, to sacrifice everything for the truth, he was inferior to the reformer in wisdom and moderation; he was not entirely exempt from vain-glory, and with a disposition inclined to examine matters to the bottom, he was defective in judgment and in clearness of ideas. Luther had dragged him from the mire of scholasticism, and directed him to the study of Scripture; but Carlstadt had not acknowledged with his friend the all-sufficiency of the Word of God. Accordingly he

was often seen adopting the most singular interpretations. So long as Luther was at his side, the superiority of the master kept the scholar within due bounds.

But now Carlstadt was free. In the university, in the church, everywhere in Wittenberg, this little darkfeatured man, who had never excelled in eloquence, might be heard proclaiming with great fervor ideas that were sometimes profound, but often enthusiastic and exaggerated. “What madness,” exclaimed he, “to think that one must leave the Reformation to God’s working alone! A new order of things is beginning. The hand of man should interfere. Woe be to him who lags behind, and does not climb the breach in the cause of the Almighty.” The archdeacon’s language communicated to others the impatience he felt himself. “All that the popes have ordained is impious,” said certain upright and sincere men who followed his example. “Let us not become partakers in those abominations by allowing them to subsist any longer. What is condemned by the Word of God ought to be put down in the whole of

Christendom, whatever may be the ordinances of men. If the heads of the State and of the Church will not do their duty, let us do ours. Let us renounce all negotiations, conferences, theses, and disputations, and let us apply the effectual remedy to so many evils. We need a second Elijah to throw down the altars of Baal." The re-establishment of the Lord's Supper, in this moment of ferment and enthusiasm, unquestionably could not present the solemnity and holiness of its first institution by the Son of God, on the eve of his death, and almost at the foot of the cross. But if God now made use of weak and perhaps passionate men, it was nevertheless his hand that revived in the Church the feast of his love.

In the previous October, Carlstadt had already celebrated the Lord's Supper in private with twelve of his friends, in accordance with Christ's institution. On the Sunday before Christmas he gave out from the pulpit that on the day of our Lord's circumcision (the first day of the year) he would distribute the eucharist in both kinds (bread and wine) to all who presented themselves at the

altar; that he would omit all useless forms, and in celebrating this mass would wear neither cope nor chasuble.

The affrighted council entreated the councillor Beyer to prevent such a flagrant irregularity; and upon this Carlstadt resolved not to wait until the appointed day. On Christmas day, 1521, he preached in the parish church on the necessity of quitting the mass and receiving the sacrament in both kinds. After the sermon he went to the altar; pronounced the words of consecration in German, and then turning towards the attentive people, said with a solemn voice: “Whosoever feels the burden of sins, and hungers and thirsts for the grace of God, let him come and receive the body and blood of our Lord.” And then, without elevating the host, he distributed the bread and wine to all, saying: “This is the cup of my blood, and blood of the new and everlasting Covenant.” Antagonist sentiments prevailed in the assembly. Some, feeling that a new grace from God had been given to the Church, approached the altar in silence and emotion. Others, attracted chiefly by the novelty, drew nigh

with a certain sense of agitation and impatience. Five communicants alone had presented themselves in the confessional: the rest simply took part in the public confession of sins. Carlstadt gave a public absolution to all, imposing for them no other penance than this: “Sin no more.” Then, finished by singing the Agnus Dei. No one opposed Carlstadt; these reforms had already obtained general assent. The archdeacon administered the Lord’s Supper again on New Year’s day, and on the Sunday following, and from that time it was regularly celebrated. Einsidlen, one of the elector’s councillors, having reproached Carlstadt with seeking his own glory rather than the salvation of his hearers: “Mighty lord,” replied he, “there is no form of death that can make me withdraw from Scripture. The Word has come upon me with such promptitude.....Woe be to me if I preach it not!” Shortly after, Carlstadt married.

In the month of January 1522, the council and university of Wittenberg regulated the celebration of the Lord’s Supper according to the new ritual.

They were, at the same time, engaged on the means of reviving the moral influence of religion; for the Reformation was destined to restore simultaneously faith, worship, and morality. It was decreed not to tolerate mendicants, whether they were begging friar or not; and that in every street there should be some pious man commissioned to take care of the poor, and summon open sinners before the university and the council. Thus fell the mass — the principal bulwark of Rome; then the Reformation passed from simple teaching into public worship. For three centuries the mass and transubstantiation had been peremptorily established. From that period everything in the Church had taken a new direction; all things tended to the glory of man and the worship of the priest. The Holy Sacrament had been adored; festivals had been instituted in honor of the sublimest miracles; the adoration of Mary had acquired a high importance; the priest who, on his consecration, received the wonderful power of “making the body of Christ,” had been separated from the laity, and had become, according to Thomas Aquinas, a mediator between God and man; celibacy had been

proclaimed as an inviolable law; auricular confession had been entered upon the people, and the cup denied them; for how could humble laymen be placed in the same rank as priests invested with the most august ministry? The mass was an insult to the Son of God: it was opposed to the perfect grace of His cross, and the spotless glory of His Everlasting kingdom. But if it lowered the Savior, it exalted the priest, whom it invested with the unparalleled power of reproducing in his hand, and at his will, the Sovereign Creator. From that time the Church seemed to exist not to preach the Gospel, but simply to reproduce Christ bodily. The Roman pontiff, whose humblest servants created at pleasure the body of God himself, sat as God in the temple of God, and claimed a spiritual treasure, from which he drew at will indulgences for the pardon of souls.

Such were the gross errors which, for three centuries, had been imposed on the Church in conjunction with the mass. When the Reformation abolished this institution of man, it abolished these abuses also. The step taken by the archdeacon of

Wittenberg was therefore one of a very extended range.

The splendid festivals that used to amuse the people, the worship of the Virgin, the pride of the priesthood, the authority of the pope — all tottered with the mass. The glory was withdrawn from the priests, to return to Jesus Christ, and the Reformation took an immense stride in advance.

Chapter 7

False Reform

Prejudiced men might have seen nothing in the work that was going on but the effects of an empty enthusiasm. The very facts were to prove the contrary, and demonstrate that there is a wide gulf between a Reformation based on the Word of God and a fanatical excitement.

Whenever a great religious ferment takes place in the Church, some impure elements always appear with the manifestations of truth. We see the rise of one or more false reforms proceeding from man, and which serve as a testimony or countersign to the real reform. Thus many false messiahs in the time of Christ testified that the real Messiah had appeared. The Reformation of the sixteenth century could not be accomplished without presenting a similar phenomenon. In the small town of Zwickau it was first manifested.

In that place there lived a few men who,

agitated by the great events that were then stirring all Christendom, aspired at direct revelations from the Deity, instead of meekly desiring sanctification of heart, and who asserted that they were called to complete the Reformation so feebly sketched out by Luther. “What is the use,” said they, “of clinging so closely to the Bible? The Bible! always the Bible! Can the Bible preach to us? Is it sufficient for our instruction? If God had designed to instruct us by a book, would he not have sent us a Bible from heaven? It is by the Spirit alone that we can be enlightened. God himself speaks to us. God himself reveals to us what we should do, and what we should preach.” Thus did these fanatics, like the adherents of Rome, attack the fundamental principle on which the entire Reformation is founded — the all-sufficiency of the Word of God.

A simple clothier, Nicholas Storch by name, announced that the angel Gabriel had appeared to him during the night, and that after communicating matters which he could not yet reveal, said to him: “Thou shalt sit on my throne.” A former student of Wittenberg, one Mark Stubner, joined Storch, and

immediately forsook his studies; for he had received direct from God (said he) the gift of interpreting the Holy Scriptures. Another weaver, Mark Thomas, added to their number; and a new adept, Thomas Munzer, a man of fanatical character, gave a regular organization to this rising sect. Storch, desirous of following Christ's example, selected from among his followers twelve apostles and seventytwo disciples. All loudly declared, as a sect in our days has done, that apostles and prophets were at length restored to the Church of God.

The new prophets, pretending to walk in the footsteps of those of old, began to proclaim their mission: "Woe! woe!" said they; "a Church governed by men so corrupt as the bishops cannot be the Church of Christ. The impious rulers of Christendom will be overthrown. In five, six, or seven years, a universal desolation will come upon the world. The Turk will seize upon Germany; all the priests will be put to death, even those who are married. No ungodly man, no sinner will remain alive; and after the earth has been purified by

blood, God will then set up a kingdom; Storch will be put in possession of the supreme authority, and commit the government of the nations to the saints. Then there will be one only faith, one only baptism. The day of the Lord is at hand, and the end of the world draweth nigh. Woe! woe! woe!" Then declaring that infant baptism was valueless, the new prophets called upon all men to come and receive from their hands the true baptism, as a sign of their introduction into the new Church of God.

This language made a deep impression on the people. Many pious souls were stirred by the thought that prophets were again restored to the Church, and all those who were fond of the marvelous threw themselves into the arms of the extravagants of Zwickau.

But scarcely had this old delusion, which had already appeared in the days of Montanism and in the Middle Ages found followers, when it met with a powerful antagonist of the Reformation. Nicholas Hausmann, of whom Luther gave this powerful testimony, "What we preach, he practices," was

pastor of Zwickau. This good man did not allow himself to be misled by the pretensions of the false prophets. He checked the innovations that Storch and his followers desired to introduce, and his two deacons acted in unison with him. The fanatics, rejected by the ministers of the Church, fell into another extravagance. They formed meetings in which revolutionary doctrines were professed. The people were agitated, and disturbances broke out. A priest, carrying the host, was pelted with stones; the civil authority interfered, and cast the ringleaders into prison. Exasperated by this proceeding, and eager to vindicate themselves and to obtain redress, Storch, Mark Thomas, and Stubner repaired to Wittenberg.

They arrived there on the 27th of December 1521. Storch led the way with the gait and bearing of a trooper. Mark Thomas and Stubner followed him. The disorder then prevailing in Wittenberg was favorable to their designs. The youths of the academy and the citizens, already profoundly agitated and in a state of excitement, were a soil well fitted to receive these new prophets.

Thinking themselves sure of support, they immediately called on the professors of the university, in order to obtain their sanction. “We are sent by God to instruct the people,” said they. “We have held familiar conversations with the Lord; we know what will happen; in a word, we are apostles and prophets, and appeal to Dr. Luther.” This strange language astonished the professors.

“Who has commissioned you to preach?” asked Melancthon of his old pupil Stubner, whom he received into his house, “The Lord our God.” — “Have you written any books?” — “The Lord our God has forbidden me to do so.” Melancthon was agitated: he grew alarmed and astonished.

“There are, indeed, extraordinary spirits in these men,” said he; “but what spirits?.....Luther alone can decide. On the one hand, let us beware of quenching the Spirit of God, and, on the other, of being led astray by the spirit of Satan.” Storch, being of a restless disposition, soon quitted Wittenberg. Stubner remained. Animated by an

eager spirit of proselytism, he went through the city, speaking now to one, then to another; and many acknowledged him as a prophet from God. He addressed himself more particularly to a Swabian named Cellarius, a friend of Melancthon's, who kept a school in which he used to instruct a great number of young people, and who soon fully acknowledged the mission of the new prophets.

Melancthon now became still more perplexed and uneasy. It was not so much the visions of the Zwickau prophets that disturbed him, as their new doctrine on baptism. It seemed to him conformable with reason, and he thought that it was deserving examination; "for," said he, "we must neither admit nor reject any thing lightly." Such is the spirit of the Reformation. Melancthon's hesitation and anxiety are a proof of the uprightness of his heart, more honorable to him, perhaps, than any systematic opposition would have been.

The elector himself, whom Melancthon styled "the lamp of Israel," hesitated. Prophets and

apostles in the electorate of Saxony as in Jerusalem of old! “This is a great matter,” said he; “and as a layman, I cannot understand it. But rather than fight against God, I would take a staff in my hand, a descend from my throne.” At length he informed the professors, by his councillors, that they had sufficient trouble in hand at Wittenberg; that in all probability these pretensions of the Zwickau prophets were only a temptation of the devil; and that the wisest course, in his opinion, would be to let the matter drop of itself; nevertheless that, under all circumstances, whenever his highness should clearly perceive God’s will, he would take counsel of neither brother nor mother, and that he was ready to suffer everything in the cause of truth. Luther in the Wartburg was apprized of the agitation prevailing in the court and at Wittenberg. Strange men had appeared, and the source whence their mission proceeded was unknown. He saw immediately that God had permitted these afflicting events to humble his servants, and to excite them by trials to strive more earnestly after sanctification.

“Your electoral grace,” wrote he to Frederick, “has for many years been collecting relics from every country. God has satisfied your desire, and has sent you, without cost of trouble, a whole cross, with nails, spears, and scourges.....Health and prosperity to the new relic!.....Only let your highness fearlessly stretch out your arm, and suffer the nails to enter your flesh!.....I always expected that Satan would send us this plague.” But at the same time nothing appeared to him more urgent than to secure for others the liberty that he claimed for himself. He had not two weights and two measures. “Beware of throwing them into prison,” wrote he to Spalatin. “Let not the prince dip his hand in the blood of these new prophets.” Luther went far beyond his age, and even beyond many other reformers, on the subject of religious liberty.

Circumstances were becoming every day more serious in Wittenberg. Carlstadt rejected many of the doctrines of the new prophets, and particularly their sentiments on baptism; but here is a contagion in religious enthusiasm that a head like his could not easily resist. From the arrival of the men of

Zwickau in Wittenberg, Carlstadt accelerated his movements in the direction of violent reforms. “We must fall upon every ungodly practice, and overthrow them all in a day,” said he. He brought together all the passages of Scripture against images, and inveighed with increasing energy against the idolatry of Rome. “They fall down — they crawl before these idols,” exclaimed he; “they burn tapers before them, and make them offerings.....Let us arise and tear them from the altars!” These words were not uttered in vain before the people. They entered the churches, carried away the images, broke them in pieces, and burnt them.

It would have been better to wait until their abolition had been legally proclaimed; but some thought that the caution of the chiefs would compromise the Reformation itself.

To judge by the language of these enthusiasts, there were no true Christians in Wittenberg save those who went not to confession, who attacked the priests, and who ate meat on fast days. If any one

was suspected of not rejecting all the rites of the Church as an invention of the devil, he was set down as a worshipper of Baal. “We must form a Church,” cried they, “composed of saints only!” The citizens of Wittenberg laid before the council certain articles which it was forced to accept. Many of the articles were conformable to evangelical morals. They required more particularly that all houses of public amusement should be closed.

But Carlstadt soon went still farther: he began to despise learning; and the old professor was heard from his chair advising his pupils to return home, to take up the spade, to guide the plough, and quietly cultivate the earth, because man was to eat bread in the sweat of his brow. George Mohr, the master of the boys’ school at Wittenberg, led away by the same fanaticism, called to the assembled citizens from the window of the schoolroom to come and take away their children. Why should they study, since Storch and Stubner had never been at the university, and yet they were prophets?.....A mechanic, therefore, was as good as all the doctors in the world; and perhaps better,

to preach the Gospel.

Thus arose doctrines in direct opposition to the Reformation, which had been prepared by the revival of letters. It was with the weapon of theological learning that Luther had attacked Rome; and the enthusiasts of Wittenberg like the fanatical monks with whom Erasmus and Reuchlin had contended, presumed to trample all human learning under foot. If this vandalism succeeded in holding its ground, the hopes of the world were lost; and another eruption of barbarians would extinguish the light that God had kindled in Christendom.

The results of these strange discourses soon showed themselves. Men’s minds were prejudiced, agitated, diverted from the Gospel; the university became disorganized; the demoralized students broke the bonds of discipline and dispersed; and the governments of Germany recalled their subjects. Thus the men who desired to reform and vivify everything, were on the point of ruining all. One struggle more (exclaimed the friends of Rome,

who on all sides were regaining their confidence), — one last struggle, and all will be ours!

Promptly to check the excesses of these fanatics was the only means of saving the Reformation. But who could do it? Melancthon? He was too young, too weak, too much agitated himself by these strange apparitions.

The elector? He was the most pacific man of his age. To build castles at Altenburg, Weimar, Lochau, and Coburg; to adorn churches with the beautiful pictures of Lucas Cranach; to improve the singing in the chapels; to advance the prosperity of his university; to promote the happiness of his subjects; to stop in the midst of the children whom he met playing in the streets, and give them little presents: — such were the gentle occupations of his life. And now in his advanced age, would he contend with fanatics — would he oppose violence to violence? How could the good and pious Frederick make up his mind to this?

The disease continued to spread, and no one

stood forward to check it.

Luther was far from Wittenberg. Confusion and ruin had taken hold of the city. The Reformation had seen an enemy spring from its own bosom more formidable than popes and emperors. It was on the very verge of the abyss.

Luther! Luther! was the general and unanimous cry at Wittenberg. The citizens called for him earnestly; the professors desired his advice; the prophets themselves appealed to him. All entreated him to return. We may imagine what was passing in the reformer's mind. All the terrors of Rome were nothing in comparison with what now wrung his heart. It is from the very midst of the Reformation that its enemies have gone forth. It is preying upon its own vitals; and that doctrine which alone brought peace to his troubled heart becomes the occasion of fatal disturbances to the Church.

"If I knew," he had once said, "that my doctrine injured one man, one single man, however lowly

and obscure (which it cannot, for it is the Gospel itself), I would rather die ten times than not retract it." And now a whole city, and that city of Wittenberg, is falling into disorder! True, his doctrine has no share in this; but from every quarter of Germany voices are heard accusing him of it.

Pains more keen than he had every felt before assail him now, and new temptations agitate him. "Can such then be the end of this great work of the Reformation?" said he to himself. Impossible! — he rejects these doubts. God has begun,.....God will perfect the work. "I creep in deep humility to the grace of the Lord," exclaimed he, "and beseech him that his name may remain attached to this work; and that if anything impure be mixed up with it, he will remember that I am a sinful man." The news communicated to Luther of the inspiration of these new prophets, and of their sublime interviews with God did not stagger him one moment. He knew the depth, the anguish, the humiliation of the spiritual life: at Erfurth and Wittenberg he had made trial of the power of God, which did not so

easily permit him to believe that God appeared to his creatures and conversed with them. “Ask these prophets,” wrote he to Melancthon, “whether they have felt those spiritual torments, those creations of God, that death and hell which accompany a real regeneration..... And they speak to you only of agreeable things, of tranquil impressions, of devotion and piety, as they say, do not believe them, although they should pretend to have been transported to the third heaven. Before Christ could attain his glory, he was compelled to suffer death; and in like manner the believer must go through the bitterness of sin before he can obtain peace. Do you desire to know the time, place, and manner in which God talks with men? Listen: as a lion so hath he broken all my bones: I am cast out from before his face, and my soul is abased even to the gates of hell.....No! The Divine Majesty (as they pretend) does not speak directly, so that men may see it; for no man can see my face and live.” But his firm conviction of the delusion under which the prophets were laboring, served but to augment Luther’s grief. Has the great truth of salvation by grace so quickly lost its charms that men turn aside

from it to follow fables? He begins to feel that the work is not so easy as he has thought at first. He stumbles at the first stone that the deceitfulness of the human heart had placed in his path; he is bowed down by grief and anxiety. He resolves, at the hazard of his life, to remove it out of the way of his people, and decides on returning to Wittenberg.

At that time he was threatened by imminent dangers. The enemies of the Reformation fancied themselves on the very eve of destroying it. George of Saxony, equally indisposed towards Rome and Wittenberg, had written, as early as the 16th of October 1521, to Duke John, the elector's brother, to draw him over to the side of the enemies of the Reformation. "Some," said he, "deny that the soul is immortal. Others (and these are monks!) attach bells to swine and set them to drag the relics of St. Anthony through the streets, and then throw them into the mire. All this is the fruit of Luther's teaching! Entreat your brother the elector either to punish the ungodly authors of these innovations, or at least publicly to declare his opinion of them. Our changing beard and hair remind us that we have

819 reached the latter portion of our course, and urge us to put an end to such great evils." After this George departed to take his seat in the imperial government at Nuremberg. He had scarcely arrived when he made every exertion to urge it to adopt measures of severity. In effect, on the 21st of January, this body passed an edict, in which it complained bitterly that the priests said mass without being robed in their sacerdotal garments, consecrated the sacrament in German, administered it without having received the requisite confession from the communicants, placed it in the hands of laymen, and were not even careful to ascertain that those who stood forward to receive it were fasting.

Accordingly the imperial government desired the bishops to seek out and punish severely all the innovators within their respective dioceses. The latter hastened to comply with these orders.

Such was the moment selected by Luther for his reappearance on the stage.

He saw the danger; he foreboded incalculable

disasters. “Erelong,” said he, “there will be a disturbance in the empire, carrying princes, magistrates, and bishops before it. The people have eyes: they will not, they cannot be led by force. All Germany will run blood. Let us stand up as a wall to preserve our nation in this dreadful day of God’s anger.”

Chapter 8

Departure from the Wartburg

Such were Luther’s thoughts; but he beheld a still more imminent danger.

At Wittenberg, the conflagration, far from dying away, became fiercer every day. From the heights of the Wartburg, Luther could perceive in the horizon the frightful gleams, the signal of devastation, shooting at intervals through the air. Is not he the only one who can give aid in this extremity?

Shall he not throw himself into the midst of the flames to quench their fury? In vain his enemies prepare to strike the decisive blow; in vain the elector entreats him not to leave the Wartburg, and to prepare his justification against the next diet. He has a more important task to perform — to justify the Gospel itself. “More serious intelligence reaches me every day,” wrote he. “I shall set out: circumstances positively require me to do so.”

Accordingly, he rose on the 3rd of March with the determination of leaving the Wartburg for ever. He bade adieu to its time-worn towers and gloomy forests. He passed beyond those walls where the excommunications of Leo X and the sword of Charles V were unable to reach him. He descended the mountain. The world that lay at his feet, and in the midst of which he is about to appear again, would soon perhaps call loudly for his death. But it matters not! he goes forward rejoicing: for in the name of the Lord he is returning among his fellow-men. Time had moved on. Luther was quitting the Wartburg for a cause very different from that for which he had entered it. He had gone thither as the assailant of the old tradition and of the ancient doctors; he left it as the defender of the doctrine of the apostles against new adversaries. He had entered it as an innovator, and as an impugner of the ancient hierarchy; he left it as a conservative and champion of the faith of Christians. Hitherto Luther had seen but one thing in his work, — the triumph of justification by faith; and with this weapon he had thrown down mighty superstitions.

But if there was a time for destroying, there was also a time for building up. Beneath those ruins with which his strong arm had strewn the plain, — beneath those crumpled letters of indulgence, those broken tiaras and tattered cowls, — beneath so many Roman abuses and errors that lay in confusion upon the field of battle, he discerned and discovered the primitive Catholic Church, reappearing still the same, and coming forth as from a long period of trial, with its unchangeable doctrines and heavenly accents. He could distinguish it from Rome, welcoming and embracing it with joy. Luther effected nothing new in the world, as he has been falsely charged; he did not raise a building for the future that had no connection with the past; he uncovered, he opened to the light of day the ancient foundations, on which thorns and thistles had sprung up, and continuing the construction of the temple, he built simply on the foundations laid by the apostles. Luther perceived that the ancient and primitive Church of the apostles must, on the one hand, be restored in opposition to the Papacy, by which it had been so long oppressed; and on the other, he

defended against enthusiasts and unbelievers, who pretended to disown it, and who, regardless of all that God had done in times past, were desirous of beginning an entirely new work. Luther was no longer exclusively the man of one doctrine, — that of justification, — although he always assigned it the highest place; he became the man of the whole Christian theology; and while he still believed that the Church was essentially the congregation of saints, he was careful not to despise the visible Church, and acknowledged the assembly of the elect as the kingdom of God. Thus was a great change effected, at this time, in Luther's heart, in his theology, and in the work of renovation that God was carrying on in the world. The Roman hierarchy might perhaps have driven the reformer to extremes; the sects which then so boldly raised their heads brought him back to the true path of moderation. The sojourn in the Wartburg divides the history of the Reformation into two periods.

Luther was riding slowly on the road to Wittenberg: it was already the second day of his journey, and Shrove Tuesday. Towards evening a

terrible storm burst forth, and the roads were flooded. Two Swiss youths, who were travelling in the same direction as himself, were hastening onwards to find a shelter in the city of Jena. They had studied at Basle, and the celebrity of Wittenberg attracted them to that university.

Travelling on foot, fatigued, and wet through, John Kessler of St. Gall and his companion quickened their steps. The city was all in commotion with the amusements of the carnival; balls, masquerades, and noisy feasting engrossed the people of Jena; and when the two travelers arrived, they could find no room at any of the inns. At last they were directed to Black Bear, outside the city gates. Dejected and harassed, they repaired thither slowly. The landlord received them kindly. They took their seats near the open door of the public room, ashamed of the state in which the storm had placed them, and not daring to go in. At one of the tables sat a solitary man in a knight’s dress, wearing a red cap on his head and breeches over which fell the skirts of his doublet; his right hand rested on the pommel of his sword, his left

grasped the hilt; and before him lay an open book, which he appeared to be reading with great attention. At the noise made by the entrance of these two young men, he raised his head, saluted them affably, and invited them to come and sit at his table; then presenting them with a glass of beer, and alluding to their accent, he said: “You are Swiss, I perceive; but from what canton?” — “From St. Gall.” — “If you are going to Wittenberg, you will there meet with a fellow-countryman, Doctor Schurff.” — Encouraged by this kind reception, they added: “Sir, could you inform us where Martin Luther is at present?” — “I know for certain,” replied the knight, “that he is not at Wittenberg; but he will be there shortly. Philip Melancthon is there. Study Greek and Hebrew, that you may clearly understand the Holy Scriptures.” — “If God spare our lives,” observed one of the young men, “we will not return home without having seen and heard Doctor Luther; for it is on his account that we have undertaken this long journey. We know that he desires to abolish the priesthood and the mass; and as our parents destined us to the priesthood from our infancy, we

should like to know clearly on what grounds he rests his proposition.” The knight was silent for a moment, and then resumed: “Where have you been studying hitherto?” — “At Basle.” — “Is Erasmus of Rotterdam still there? what is he doing?” They replied to his questions, and there was another pause. The two Swiss knew not what to think. “Is it not strange,” thought they, “that this knight talks to us of Schurff, Melancthon, and Erasmus, and on the necessity of learning Greek and Hebrew.” — “My dear friends,” said the unknown suddenly, “what do they think of Luther in Switzerland?” — “Sir,” replied Kessler, “opinions are very divided about him there as everywhere else. Some cannot extol him enough; and others condemn him as an abominable heretic.” — “Ha! the priests, no doubt,” said the stranger.

The knight’s cordiality had put the students at their ease. They longed to know what book he was reading at the moment of their arrival. The knight had closed it, and placed it by his side. At last Kessler’s companion ventured to take it up. To the great astonishment of the two young men, it was

the Hebrew Psalter! The student laid it down immediately, and as if to divert attention from the liberty he had taken, said: “I would willingly give one of my fingers to know that language.” — “You will attain your wish,” said the stranger, “if you will only take the trouble to learn it.” A few minutes after, Kessler heard the landlord calling him; the poor Swiss youth feared something had gone wrong; but the host whispered to him: “I perceive that you have a great desire to see and hear Luther; well! it is he who is seated beside you.” Kessler took this for a joke, and said: “Mr. Landlord, you want to make a fool of me.” — “It is he in very truth,” replied the host; “but do not let him see that you know him.” Kessler made no answer, but returned into the room and took his seat at the table, burning to repeat to his comrade what he had just heard. But how could he manage it? At last he thought of leaning forward, as if he were looking towards the door, and then whispered into his friend’s ear: “The landlord assures me that this man is Luther.” — “Perhaps he said Hutten,” replied his comrade; “you did not hear him distinctly.” — “It may be so,” returned Kessler;

“the host said: It is Hutten; the two names are pretty much alike, and I mistook one for the other.” At that moment the noise of horses was heard before the inn; two merchants, who desired a lodging, entered the room; they took off their spurs, laid down their cloaks, and one of them placed beside him on the table an unbound book, which soon attracted the knight’s notice. “What book is that?” asked he. — “A commentary on some of the Gospels and Epistles by Doctor Luther,” replied the merchant; “it is just published.” — “I shall procure it shortly,” said the knight.

At this moment the host came to announce that supper was ready. The two students, fearing the expense of such a meal in company with the knight Ulrich of Hutten and two wealthy merchants, took the landlord aside, and begged him to serve them with something apart. “Come along, my friends,” replied the landlord of the Black Bear; “take your place at table beside this gentleman; I will charge you moderately.” — “Come along,” said the knight, “I will settle the score.” During this meal,

the stranger knight uttered many simple and edifying remarks. The students and the merchants were all ears, and paid more attention to his words than to the dishes set before them. “Luther must either be an angel from heaven or a devil from hell,” said one of the merchants in course of conversation; “I would readily give ten florins if I could meet Luther and confess to him.” When supper was over, the merchants left the table; the two Swiss remained alone with the knight, who, taking a large glass of beer, rose and said solemnly, after the manner of the country: “Swiss, one glass more for thanks.” As Kessler was about to take the glass, the unknown set it down again, and offered him one filled with wine, saying: “You are not accustomed to beer.” He then arose, flung a military cloak over his shoulders, and extending his hand to the students, said to them: “When you reach Wittenberg, salute Doctor Schurff on my part.” — “Most willingly,” replied they; “but what name shall we give?” — “Tell him simply,” added Luther, “He that is to come salutes you.” With these words he quitted the room, leaving them full of admiration at his kindness and good nature.

Luther, for it was really he, continued his journey. It will be remembered that he had been laid under the ban of the empire; whoever met and recognized him, might seize him. But at the time when he was engaged in an undertaking that exposed him to every risk, he was calm and serene, and conversed cheerfully with those whom he met on the road.

It was not that he deceived himself: he saw the future big with storms.

“Satan,” said he, “is enraged, and all around are plotting death and hell. Nevertheless, I go forward, and throw myself in the way of the emperor and of the pope, having no protector save God in heaven. Power has been given to all men to kill me wherever they find me. But Christ is the Lord of all; if it be his will that I be put to death, so be it!” On that same day, Ash-Wednesday, Luther reached Borna, a small town near Leipsic. He felt it his duty to inform the prince of the bold step he was about to take; and accordingly alighted at the

Guide Hotel and wrote the following letter:—“Grace and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ!

“Most serene Elector, gracious Lord! The events that have taken place at Wittenberg, to the great reproach of the Gospel, have caused me such pain that if I were not confident of the truth of our cause, I should have given way to despair.

“Your highness knows this, or if not, be it known to you now, that I received the Gospel not from men but from heaven, through our Lord Jesus Christ. If I called for discussion, it was not because I had any doubts of the truth, but in humility, and in the hope to win over others. But since my humility is turned against the Gospel, my conscience compels me now to act otherwise. I have sufficiently given way to your highness by passing this year in retirement. The devil knows well that I did so not through fear. I should have entered Worms had there been as many devils in the city as tiles on the house-tops. Now Duke George, with whom your highness frightens me, is

yet much less to be feared than a single devil. If that which is passing at Wittenberg were taking place at Leipsic (the duke's residence), I would immediately mount my horse to go thither, although (may your highness pardon these words) for nine whole days together it were to rain nothing but Duke Georges, and each one nine times more furious than he is.

What does he think of in attacking me? Does he take Christ my Lord for a man of straw? O Lord, be pleased to avert the terrible judgment which is impending over him!

"Be it known to your highness that I am going to Wittenberg under a protection far higher than that of princes and electors. I think not of soliciting your highness's support, and, far from desiring your protection, I would rather protect you myself. If I knew that your highness could or would protect me, I would not go to Wittenberg at all. There is no sword than can further this cause. God alone must do everything without the help or concurrence of man. He who has the greatest faith is he who is

most able to protect. But I observe that your highness is still weak in faith.

“But since your highness desires to know what you have to do, I will answer with all deference: your highness has already done too much, and ought to do nothing at all. God will not and cannot endure either your cares and labors or mine. Let your highness’s conduct be guided by this.

“As for what concerns me, your highness must act as an elector; you must let the orders of his imperial majesty take their course in your towns and rural districts. You must offer no resistance if men desire to seize or kill me; for no one should resist dominions except He who has established them.

“Let your highness leave the gates open, and respect safe-conducts, if my enemies in person or their envoys come in search of me into your highness’s states. Everything shall be done without trouble or danger to yourself.

“I have written this letter in haste, that you may not be made uneasy at hearing of my arrival. I have to do with a very different man from Duke George. He knows me well, and I know him pretty well.

“Given at Borna, at the inn of the Guide, this Ash-Wednesday 1522.

“Your electoral highness’s “Very humble servant, “MARTIN LUTHER.” It was thus Luther drew nigh to Wittenberg. He wrote to his prince, but not to excuse himself. An imperturbable confidence filled his heart. He saw the hand of God in this cause, and that was sufficient for him. The heroism of faith can never be carried farther. One of the editions of Luther’s works has the following remark in the margin of this letter: “This is a wonderful writing of the third and last Elias!” Luther re-entered Wittenberg of Friday the 7th March, having been five days on the way from Eisenach. Doctors, students, and citizens, all broke forth in rejoicings; for they had recovered the pilot who alone could extricate the vessel from the reefs among which it was entangled.

The elector, who was at Lockau with his court, felt great emotion as he read the reformer's letter. He was desirous of vindicating him before the diet: "Let him address me a letter," wrote the prince to Schurff, "explaining the motives of his return to Wittenberg, and let him say also that he returned without my permission." Luther consented.

"I am ready to incur the displeasure of your highness and the anger of the whole world," wrote he to the prince. "Are not the Wittenbergers my sheep? Has God not intrusted them to me? And ought I not, if necessary, to expose myself to death for their sakes?

Besides, I fear to see a terrible outbreak in Germany by which God will punish our nation. Let your highness be well assured and doubt not that the decrees of heaven are very different from those of Nuremberg." This letter was written on the very day of Luther's arrival at Wittenberg.

The following day, being the eve of the first

Sunday in Lent, Luther visited Jerome Schurff. Melancthon, Jonas, Amsdorff, and Augustin Schurff, Jerome's brother, were there assembled. Luther eagerly questioned them, and they were informing him of all that had taken place, when two foreign students were announced, desiring to speak with Dr. Jerome. On entering this assembly of doctors, to two young men of St. Gall were at first abashed; but they soon recovered themselves on discovering the knight of the Black Bear among them. The latter immediately went up to them, greeted them as old acquaintances, and smiled as he pointed to one of the doctors: "This is Philip Melancthon, whom I mentioned to you." The two Swiss remained all day with the doctors of Wittenberg, in remembrance of the meeting at Jena.

One great thought absorbed the reformer's mind, and checked the joy he felt at meeting his friends once more. Unquestionably the character in which he was now to appear was obscure; he was about to raise his voice in a small town of Saxony, and yet his undertaking had all the importance of

an event which was to influence the destinies of the world. Many nations and many ages were to feel its effects. It was a question whether that doctrine which he had derived from the Word of God, and which was ordained to exert so mighty an influence on the future development of the human race, would be stronger than the destructive principles that threatened its existence. It was a question whether it were possible to reform without destroying, and clear the way to new developments without annihilating the old. To silence fanatical men inspired by the energy of a first enthusiasm; to master an unbridled multitude, to calm it down, to lead it back to order, peace, and truth; to break the course of the impetuous torrent which threatened to overthrow the rising edifice of the Reformation, and to scatter it ruins far and wide: — such was the task for which Luther had returned to Wittenberg. But would his influence be sufficient for this? The event alone can show.

The reformer’s heart shuddered at the thought of the struggle that awaited him. He raised his head as a lion provoked to fight shakes his long mane.

“We must now trample Satan under foot, and contend against the angel of darkness,” said he. “If our adversaries do not retire of their own accord, Christ will know how to compel them. We who trust in the Lord of life and of death are ourselves lords of life and of death.” But at the same time the impetuous reformer, as if constrained by a superior power, refused to employ the anathemas and thunders of the Word, and became an humble pastor, a gentle shepherd of souls. “It is with the Word that we must fight,” said he; “by the Word must we overthrow and destroy what has been set up by violence. I will not make use of force against the superstitions and unbelieving. Let him who believeth draw nigh! let him who believeth not keep afar off! no one must be constrained.

Liberty is the very essence of faith.” The next day was Sunday. On that day the doctor, whom for nearly a year the lofty ramparts of the Warburg have concealed from every eye, will reappear before the people in the pulpit of the church. It was rumored in Wittenberg that Luther was come back,

that he was going to preach. This news alone, passing from mouth to mouth, had already given a powerful diversion to the ideas by which the people were misled. They are going to see the hero of Worms. The people crowded together, and were affected by various emotions. On Sunday morning the church was filled with an attentive and excited crown.

Luther divines all the sentiments of his congregation; he goes up into the pulpit; there he stands in the presence of the flock that he had once led as a docile sheep, but which had broken from him like an untamed bull. His language was simple, noble, yet full of strength and gentleness: one might have supposed him to be a tender father returning to his children, inquiring into their conduct, and kindly telling them what report he had heard about them. He candidly acknowledged the progress they had made in faith; and by this means prepared and captivated their minds. He then continued in these words: — “But we need something more than faith; we need charity. If a man who bears a sword in his hand be alone, it is

of little consequence whether it be sheathed or not; but if he is in the midst of a crowd, he should act so as to wound nobody.

“What does a mother do to her infant? At first she gives it milk, then some very light food. If she were to begin by giving it meat and wine, what would be the consequence?.....

“So should we act towards our brethren. My friend, have you been long enough at the breast? It is well! but permit your brother to drink as long as yourself.

“Observe the sun! He dispenses two things, light and heat. There is no king so powerful as to bend aside his rays; they come straight to us; but heat is radiated and communicated in every direction. Thus faith, like light, should always be straight and inflexible; but charity, like heat, should radiate on every side, and bend to all the wants of our brethren.” Luther having thus prepared his hearers, began to press them more closely: “The abolition of the mass, say you, is in conformity

with Scripture: Agreed! But what order, what decency have you observed? It behoved you to offer up fervent prayers to the Lord, and apply to the public authority; then might every man have acknowledged that the thing was of God."

Thus spake Luther. This dauntless man, who at Worms had withstood the princes of the earth, produced a deep impression on the minds of his hearers by these words of wisdom and of peace. Carlstadt and the prophets of Zwickau, so great and powerful for a few weeks, and who had tyrannized over and agitated Wittenberg, had shrunk into pigmies beside the captive of Warburg.

"The mass," continued he, "is a bad thing; God is opposed to it; it ought to be abolished; and I would that throughout the whole world it were replaced by the Supper of the Gospel. But let no one be torn from it by force. We must leave the matter in God's hands.

His Word must act, and not we. And why so, you will ask?

Because I do not hold men’s hearts in my hand, as the potter holds the clay. We have a right to speak; we have not the right to act. Let us preach: the rest belongs unto God. Were I to employ force, what should I gain? Grimace, formality, apelings, human ordinances, and hypocrisy.....But there would be no sincerity of heart, nor faith, nor charity. Where these three are wanting, all is wanting, and I would not give a pear-stalk for such a result. “Our first object must be to win men’s hearts; and for that purpose we must preach the Gospel. Today the Word will fall in one heart, tomorrow in another, and it will operate in such a manner that each one will withdraw from the mass and abandon it. God does more by his Word alone than you and I and all the world by our united strength. God lays hold upon the heart; and when the heart is taken, all is won.

“I do not say this for the restoration of the mass. Since it is down, in God’s name there let it lie! But should you have gone to work as you did? Paul, arriving one day in the powerful city of

Athens, found there altars raised to false gods. He went from one to the other, and observed them without touching one. But he walked peaceably to the middle of the market-place, and declared to the people that all their gods were idols. His language took possession of their hearts, and the idols fell without Paul's having touched them.

"I will preach, discuss, and write; but I will constrain none, for faith is a voluntary act. See what I have done! I stood up against the pope, indulgences, and papists, but without violence or tumult.

I put forward God's Word; I preached and wrote — this was all i did. And yet while I was asleep, or seated familiarly at table with Amsdorff and Melancthon, drinking and gossiping over our Wittenberg beer, the Word that I had preached overthrew popery, so that neither prince nor emperor has done it so much harm. And yet I did nothing: the Word alone did all. If I had wished to appeal to force, the whole of Germany would perhaps have been deluged with blood. But what

would have been the result? Ruin and desolation both to body and soul I therefore kept quiet, and left the Word to run through the world alone. Do you know what the devil thinks when he sees men resort to violence to propagate the Gospel through the world? Seated with folded arms behind the fire of hell, Satan says, with malignant looks and frightful grin: Ah! how wise these madmen are to play my game!' But when he sees the Word running and contending alone on the field of battle, then he is troubled, and his knees knock together; he shudders and faints with fear." Luther went into the pulpit again on Tuesday; and his powerful voice resounded once more through the agitated crowd. He preached again on the five succeeding days. He took a review of the destruction of images, distinction of meats, the institution of the Lord's Supper, the restoration of the cup, the abolition of confession. He showed that these points were of far less importance than the mass, and that the originators of the disorders that had taken place in Wittenberg had grossly abused their liberty. He employed by turns the language of christian charity and bursts of holy indignation.

He inveighed more especially against those who partook thoughtlessly of Christ's Supper. "It is not the outward manducation that maketh a Christian," said he, "but the inward and spiritual eating that worketh by faith, and without which all forms are mere show and grimace. Now this faith consists in a firm belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that having taken our sins and iniquities upon himself, and having borne them on the cross, he is himself their sole and almighty atonement; that he stands continually before God, that he reconcileth us with the Father, and that he hath given us the sacrament of his body to strengthen our faith in this unspeakable mercy. If I believe in these things, God is my defender; with him, I brave sin, death, hell, and devils; they can do me no harm, nor disturb a single hair of my head. This spiritual bread is the consolation of the afflicted, health to the sick, life to the dying, food to the hungry, riches to the poor. He who does not groan under his sins must not approach that altar: what can he do there? Ah! let our conscience accuse us, let our hearts be rent in twain at the thought of our

sins, and then we shall not so presumptuously approach the holy sacrament.” The crowd ceased not to fill the temple; people flocked from the neighboring towns to hear the new Elijah. Among others, Capito spent two days at Wittenberg, and heard two of the doctor’s sermons. Never had Luther and Cardinal Albert’s chaplain been so well agreed. Melancthon, the magistrates, the professors, and all the inhabitants, were delighted. Schurff, charmed at the result of so gloomy an affair, hastened to communicate it to the elector. On Friday the 15th March, the day on which Luther delivered his sixth sermon, he wrote: “Oh, what joy has Dr.

Martins’s return diffused among us! His words, through Divine mercy, every day are bringing back our poor misguided people into the way of truth. It is clear as the sun that the Spirit of God is in him, and that by His special providence he returned to Wittenberg.” In truth, these sermons are models of popular eloquence, but not of that which in the times of Demosthenes, or even of Savonarola, fired men’s hearts. The task of the Wittenberg orator

was more difficult. It is easier to rouse the fury of a wild beast that to allay it. Luther had to soothe a fanaticized multitude, to tame its unbridled passions; and in this he succeeded. In his eight discourses, the reformer did not allow one offensive word to escape him against the originators of these disorders, — not one unpleasant allusion. But the greater his moderation, the greater also was his strength; the more caution he used towards these deluded men, the more powerful was his vindication of offended truth. How could the people of Wittenberg resist his powerful eloquence? Men usually ascribe to timidity, fear, and compromise, those speeches that advocate moderation. Here there was nothing of the sort. Luther appeared before the inhabitants of Wittenberg, braving the excommunication of the pope and the proscription of the emperor. He had returned in despite of the prohibition of the elector, who had declared his inability to defend him. Even at Worms, Luther had not shown so much courage. He confronted the most imminent dangers; and accordingly his words were not disregarded: the man who braved the scaffold had a right to exhort

to submission. That man may boldly speak of obedience to God, who, to do so, defies all the persecution of man. At Luther's voice all objections vanished, the tumult subsided, seditious cries were heard no longer, and the citizens of Wittenberg returned quietly to their dwellings.

Gabriel Didymus, who had shown himself the most enthusiastic of all the Augustine Friars, did not lose one of the reformer's words. "Do you not think Luther a wonderful teacher?" asked a hearer in great emotion. "Ah!" replied he, "I seem to listen to the voice, not of a man, but of an angel." Erelong Didymus openly acknowledged that he had been deceived.

"He is quite another man," said Luther. It was not so at first with Carlstadt. Despising learning, pretending to frequent the workshops of the Wittenberg mechanics to receive understanding of the Holy Scriptures, he was mortified at seeing his work crumble away at Luther's appearance. In his eyes this was checking the reform itself. Hence his air was always dejected, gloomy, and dissatisfied.

Yet he sacrificed his self-love for the sake of peace; he restrained his desires of vengeance, and became reconciled, outwardly at least, with his colleague, and shortly after resumed his lectures in the university. The chief prophets were not at Wittenberg when Luther returned. Nicholas Storch was wandering through the country; Mark Stubner had quitted Melancthon's hospitable roof. Perhaps their prophetic spirit had disappeared, and they had had neither voice nor answer, so soon as they learnt that Elijah was directing his steps towards this new Carmel.

The old schoolmaster Cellarius alone had remained. Stubner, however, being informed that the sheep of his fold were scattered, hastily returned.

Those who were still faithful to "the heavenly prophecy" gathered round their master, reported Luther's speeches to him, and asked him anxiously what they were to think and do. Stubner exhorted them to remain firm in their faith. "Let him appear," cried Cellarius, "let him grant us a

conference, — let him only permit us to set forth our doctrine, and then we shall see.....” Luther cared little to meet such men as these; he know them to be of violent, impatient, and haughty disposition, who could not endure even kind admonition, and who required that everyone should submit at the first word, as to a supreme authority. Such are the enthusiasts in every age.

And yet, as they desired an interview, the doctor could not refuse it.

Besides, it might be of use to the weak ones of the flock were he to unmask the imposture of the prophets. The conference took place. Stubner opened the proceedings, explaining in what manner he desired to regenerate the Church and transform the world. Luther listened to him with great calmness. “Nothing that you have advanced,” replied he at last gravely, “is based upon Holy Scripture. — It is all a mere fable.” At these words Cellarius could contain himself no longer; he raised his voice, gesticulated like a madman, stamped, and struck the table with his fist, and exclaimed, in

a passion, that it was an insult to speak thus to a man of God. Upon this Luther observed: “St. Paul declares that the proofs of apostleship were made known by miracles; prove yours in like manner.” — “We will do so,” answered the prophets. “The God whom I worship,” said Luther, “will know how to bridle your gods.” Stubner, who had preserved his tranquillity, then fixed his eyes on the reformer, and said to him with an air of inspiration, “Martin Luther! I will declare what is now passing in thy soul.....Thou art beginning to believe that my doctrine is true.” Luther, after a brief pause, exclaimed: “God chastise thee, Satan!” At these words all the prophets were as if distracted. “The Spirit, the Spirit!” cried they. Luther, adopting that cool tone of contempt and cutting and homely language so familiar to him, said, “I slap your spirit on the snout.” Their clamors now increased; Cellarius, in particular, distinguished himself by his violence. He foamed and trembled with anger.

They could not hear one another in the room where they met in conference. At length the three prophets abandoned the field and left Wittenberg

the same day.

Thus had Luther accomplished the work for which he had left his retreat.

He had made a stand against fanaticism, and expelled from the bosom of the renovated Church the enthusiasm and disorder by which it had been invaded. If with one hand the Reformation threw down the dusty decretals of Rome, with the other it rejected the assumptions of the mystics, and established, on the ground it had won, the living and unchangeable Word of God. The character of the Reformation was thus firmly settled. It was destined to walk for every between these two extremes, equally remote from the convulsions of the fanatics and the death-like torpor of the papacy.

A whole population excited, deluded, and unrestrained, had at once become tranquil, calm, and submissive; and the most perfect quiet again reigned in that city which a few days before had been like the troubled sea.

Perfect liberty was immediately established at Wittenberg. Luther still continued to reside in the convent and wear his monastic dress; but every one was free to do otherwise. In communicating at the Lord’s table, a general absolution was sufficient, or a particular one might be obtained. It was laid down as a principle to reject nothing but what was opposed to a clear and formal declaration of Holy Scripture. This was not indifference; on the contrary, religion was thus restored to what constitutes its very essence; the sentiment of religion withdrew from the accessory forms in which it had well nigh perished, and transferred itself to its true basis. Thus the Reformation was saved, and its teaching enabled to continue its development in the bosom of the Church in charity and truth.

Chapter 9

Translation of the New Testament

Tranquility was hardly established when the reformer turned to his dear Melancthon, and demanded his assistance in the final revision of the New Testament which he had brought with him from the Wartburg. As early as the year 1519 Melancthon had laid down the grand principle, that the Fathers must be explained according to Scripture, and not Scripture according to the Fathers. Meditating more profoundly every day on the books of the New Testament, he felt at once charmed by their simplicity and impressed by their depth. “There alone can we find the true food of the soul,” boldly asserted this man so familiar with all the philosophy of the ancients. Accordingly he readily complied with Luther’s invitation; and from that time the two friends passed many long hours together studying and translating the inspired Word. Often would they pause in their laborious

researches to give way to their admiration. Luther said one day, “Reason thinks, Oh! if I could once hear God speak! I would run from one end of the world to the other to hear him.....Listen then, my brother man! God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, speaks to thee.” The printing of the New Testament was carried on with unexampled zeal.

One would have said that the very workmen felt the importance of the task in which they were engaged. Three presses were employed in this labor, and ten thousand sheets, says Luther, were printed daily. At length, on the 21st September 1522, appeared the complete edition of three thousand copies, in two folio volumes, with this simple title: THE NEW TESTAMENT — GERMAN — Wittenberg. It bore no name of man.

Every German might henceforward procure the Word of God at a moderate price. The new translation, written in the very tone of the holy writings, in a language yet in its youthful vigor, and which for the first time displayed its great beauties, interested, charmed, and moved the

lowest as well as the highest ranks. It was a national work; the book of the people; nay more — it was in very truth the Book of God. Even opponents could not refuse their approbation to this wonderful work, and some indiscreet friends of the reformer, impressed by the beauty of the translation, imagined they could recognize in it a second inspiration. This version served more than all Luther's writings to the spread of christian piety. The work of the sixteenth century was thus placed on a foundation where nothing could shake it. The Bible, given to the people, recalled the mind of man, which had been wandering for ages in the tortuous labyrinth of scholasticism, to the Divine fountain of salvation. Accordingly the success of this work was prodigious. In a short time every copy was sold. A second edition appeared in the month of December; and in seventeen editions had been printed at Wittenberg, thirteen at Augsburg, twelve at Basle, one at Erfurth, one at Grimma, one at Leipsic, and thirteen at Strasburg. Such were the powerful levers that uplifted and transformed the Church and the world.

While the first edition of the New Testament was going through the press, Luther undertook a translation of the Old. This labor, begun in 1522, was continued without interruption. He published this translation in parts as they were finished, the more speedily to gratify public impatience, and to enable the poor to procure the book.

From Scripture and faith, two sources which in reality are but one, the life of the Gospel has flowed, and is still spreading over the world. These two principles combated two fundamental errors. Faith was opposed to the Pelagian tendency of Roman-catholicism; Scripture, to the theory of tradition and the authority of Rome. Scripture led man to faith, and faith led him back to Scripture. “Man can do no meritorious work; the free grace of God, which he receives by faith in Christ, alone saves him.” Such was the doctrine proclaimed in Christendom.

But this doctrine could not fail to impel Christendom to the study of Scripture. In truth, if faith in Christ is everything in Christianity, if the

practices and ordinances of the Church are nothing, it is not to the teaching of the Church that we should adhere, but to the teaching of Christ. The bond that unites to Christ will become everything to the believer. What matters to him the outward link that connects him with an outward church enslaved by the opinions of men?.....Thus, as the doctrine of the Bible had impelled Luther's contemporaries towards Jesus Christ, so in turn the love they felt to Jesus Christ impelled them to the Bible. It was not, as has been supposed in our days, from a philosophical principle, or in consequence of doubt, or from the necessity of inquiry, that they returned to Scripture; it was because they there found the Word of Him they loved.

"You have preached Christ to us," said they to the reformer, "let us now hear him himself." And they seized the pages that were spread before them, as a letter coming from heaven.

But if the Bible was thus gladly received by those who loved Christ, it was scornfully rejected by those who preferred the traditions and

observances of men. A violent persecution was waged against this work of the reformer's. At the news of Luther's publication, Rome trembled. The pen which had transcribed the sacred oracles was really that which Frederick had seen in his dream, and which, reaching to the Seven Hills, had shaken the tiara of the papacy. The monk in his cell, the prince on his throne, uttered a cry of anger. Ignorant priests shuddered at the thought that every citizen, nay every peasant, would now be able to dispute with them on the precepts of our Lord. The King of England denounced the work to the Elector Frederick and to Duke George of Saxony. But as early as the month of November the duke had ordered his subjects to deposit every copy of Luther's New Testament in the hands of the magistrates. Bavaria, Brandenburg, Austria, and all the states devoted to Rome, published similar decrees. In some places they made sacrilegious bonfires of these sacred books in the public places. Thus did Rome in the sixteenth century renew the efforts by which paganism had attempted to destroy the religion of Jesus Christ, at the moment when the dominion was escaping from the priests

and their idols. But who can check the triumphant progress of the Gospel? “Even after my prohibition,” wrote Duke George, “many thousand copies were sold and read in my states.” God even made use of those hands to circulate his Word that were endeavoring to destroy it.

The Romanist theologians, seeing that they could not prohibit the reformer’s work, published a translation of the New Testament. It was Luther’s version, altered here and there by the publishers. There was no hindrance to its being read. Rome as yet knew not that wherever the Word of God is established, there her power is shaken. Joachim of Brandenburg permitted all his subjects to read any translation of the Bible, in Latin or in German, provided it did not come from Wittenberg. The people of Germany, and those of Brandenburg in particular, thus made great progress in the knowledge of the truth.

The publication of the New Testament in the vulgar tongue is an important epoch in the Reformation. If Feldkirchen’s marriage was the

first step in the progress of the Reformation from doctrine into social life; it the abolition of monastic vows was the second; if the re-establishment of the Lord’s Supper was the third, — the publication of the New Testament was perhaps the most important of all. It worked an entire change in society: not only in the Presbytery of the priest, in the monk’s cell, and in the sanctuary of our Lord; but also in the mansions of the great, in the houses of the citizens, and cottages of the peasants. When the Bible began to be read in the families of Christendom, Christendom itself was changed.

Then arose other habits, other manners, other conversations, and another life. With the publication of the New Testament, the Reformation left the School and the Church to take possession of the hearts of the people.

The effect produced was immense. The Christianity of the primitive Church, drawn by the publication of the Holy Scriptures from the oblivion of centuries in which it had lain, was thus presented before the eyes of the nation; and this

view was sufficient to justify the attacks that had been made against Rome. The simplest men, provided they knew how to read, women, mechanics (our informant is a contemporary and violent opponent of the Reformation) eagerly studied the New Testament. They carried it about with them; soon they knew it by heart, and the pages of this book loudly proclaimed the perfect unison of Luther's Reformation with the Divine revelation.

And yet it was only by fragments that the doctrine of the Bible and of the Reformation had been set forth hitherto. A certain truth had been put forward in one writing; a certain error attacked in another. On one vast plain lay scattered and confused the ruins of the old edifice and the materials of the new: but the new edifice was wanting. The publication of the New Testament undoubtedly satisfied this want. The Reformation could say, as it gave this book: Here is my system! But as every man is at liberty to assert that his system is that of the Bible, the Reformation was called to arrange what it had found in Scripture.

And this Melancthon now did in its name.

He had walked with regular but confident steps in the development of his theology, and had from time to time published the results of his inquiries.

Before this, in 1520, he had declared that in several of the seven sacraments he could see nothing but an imitation of the Jewish ceremonies; and in the infallibility of the pope, a haughty presumption equally opposed to the Holy Scriptures and to good sense. “To contend against these doctrines,” he had said, “we require more than one Hercules.” Thus had Melancthon reached the same point as Luther, although by a calmer and more scientific process. The time had come in which he was to confess his faith in his turn.

In 1521, during Luther’s captivity, Melancthon’s celebrated work, “On the Common-places of Theology,” had presented to christian Europe a body of doctrine of solid foundation and admirable proportion. A simple and majestic unity appeared before the astonished eyes of the new

generation. The translation of the Testament justified the Reformation to the people; Melancthon's Common-places justified it in the opinion of the learned.

For fifteen centuries the Church had existed, and had never seen such a work. Forsaking the ordinary developments of scholastic theology, Luther's friends at last gave the world a theological system derived solely from Scripture. In it there reigned a breath of life, a vitality of understanding, a strength of conviction, and a simplicity of statement, forming a striking contrast with the subtle and pedantic systems of the schools. The most philosophical minds, as well as the strictest theologians, were equally filled with admiration.

Erasmus entitled this work a wondrous army drawn up in battle array against the tyrannous battalions of the false doctors; and while he avowed his dissent from the author on several points, he added, that although he had always loved him, he had never loved him so much as after reading this work. "So true it is," said Calvin when

presenting it subsequently to France, “that the greatest simplicity is the greatest virtue in treating of the christian doctrine.” But no one felt such joy as Luther. Throughout life this work was the object of his admiration. The disconnected sounds that his hand, in the deep emotion of his soul, had drawn from the harp of the prophets and apostles, were here blended together in one enchanting harmony. Those scattered stones, which he had laboriously hewn from the quarries of Scripture, were now combined into a majestic edifice. Hence he never ceased recommending the study of this work to the youths who came to Wittenberg in search of knowledge: “If you desire to become theologians,” he would way, “read Melancthon.” According to Melancthon, a deep conviction of the wretched state to which man is reduced by sin is the foundation on which the edifice of christian theology should be raised. This universal evil is the primary fact, the leading idea on which the science is based; it is the characteristic that distinguishes theology from those sciences whose only instrument is reason.

The christian divine, diving into the heart of man, explains its laws and mysterious attractions, as another philosopher in after-years explained the laws and attraction of bodies. “Original sin,” said he, “is an inclination born with us, — a certain impulse which is agreeable to us, — a certain force leading us to sin, and which has been communicated by Adam to all his posterity. As in fire there is a native energy impelling it to mount upward, as there is in the loadstone a natural quality by which iron is attracted; so also there is in man a primitive force that inclines him to evil.

I grant that in Socrates, Xenocrates, and Zeno were found temperance, firmness, and chastity; these shadows of virtues were found in impure hearts and originated in self-love. This is why we should regard them not as real virtues, but as vices.” This language may seem harsh; but not so if we apprehend Melancthon’s meaning aright. No one was more willing than himself to acknowledge virtues in the pagans that entitled them to the esteem of man; but he laid down this great truth, that the sovereign law given by God to all his

creatures, is to love him above all things. Now, if man, in doing that which God commands, does it not from love to God, but from love of self, can God accept him for daring to substitute himself in the place of His infinite Majesty? and can there be no sinfulness in an action that is express rebellion against the supreme Deity?

The Wittenberg divine then proceeds to show how man is saved from this wretchedness. “The apostle!” said he, “invites thee to contemplate the Son of God sitting at the right hand of the Father, mediating and interceding for us; and calls upon thee to feel assured that thy sins are forgiven thee, that thou art reputed righteous, and accepted by the Father for the sake of the Son who suffered for us on the cross.” The first edition of the Common-places is especially remarkable for the manner in which the theologian of Germany speaks of free will. He saw more clearly perhaps than Luther, for he was a better theologian than he, that this doctrine could not be separated from that which constituted the very essence of the Reformation. Man’s justification before God proceeds from faith

alone: this is the first point. This faith enters man's heart by the grace of God alone: here is the second. Melancthon saw clearly that if he allowed that man had any natural ability to believe, he would be throwing down in the second point that great doctrine of grace which he had stated in the first. He had too much discernment and understanding of the Holy Scriptures to be mistaken in so important a matter. But he went too far.

Instead of confining himself within the limits of the religious question, he entered upon metaphysics. He established a fatalism which might tend to represent God as the author of evil, — a doctrine which has no foundation in Scripture. "As all things which happen," said he, "happen necessarily according to the Divine predestination, there is no such thing as liberty in our wills." But the object Melancthon had particularly in view was to present theology as a system of piety. The schoolmen had so dried up the doctrine as to leave no traces of vitality in it. The task of the Reformation was therefore to reanimate this lifeless doctrine. In the subsequent editions,

Melancthon felt the necessity of expounding these doctrines with greater clearness. But such was not precisely the case in 1521. “To know Christ,” said he, “is to know his blessings. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, desiring to give a summary of the christian doctrines, does not philosophize on the mystery of the Trinity, on the mode of incarnation, on active or passive creation; of what then does he speak? — of the law, — of sin, — of grace. On this our knowledge of Christ depends.” The publication of this body of theology was of inestimable value to the cause of truth. Calumnies were refuted; prejudices swept away. In the churches, palaces, and universities, Melancthon’s genius found admirers, who esteemed the graces of his character. Even those who knew not the author were attracted to his creed by his book. The roughness and occasional violence of Luther’s language had often repelled many. But here was a man who explained those mighty truths whose sudden explosion had shaken the world, with great elegance of style, exquisite taste, admirable perspicuity, and perfect order. The work was sought after and read with avidity, and studied with ardor. Such gentleness

and moderation won all hearts. Such nobility and force commanded their respect; and the superior classes of society, hitherto undecided, were gained over by a wisdom, that made use of such beautiful language.

On the other hand, the adversaries of truth, whom Luther's terrible blows had not yet humbled, remained for a time silent and disconcerted at the appearance of Melancthon's treatise. They saw that there was another man as worthy of their hatred as Luther himself. "Alas!" exclaimed they, "unhappy Germany! to what extremity wilt thou be brought by this new birth!" Between the years 1521 and 1595 the Common-places passed through sixty-seven editions, without including translations. Next to the Bible, this is the book that has possibly contributed most to the establishment of the evangelical doctrine.

Chapter 10

Opposition

While the “grammarian” Melancthon was contributing by these gentle strains a powerful support to Luther, men of authority, enemies to the reformer, were turning violently against him. He had escaped from the Wartburg and reappeared on the stage of the world; and at this news the rage of his former enemies was revived.

Luther had been three months and a half at Wittenberg when a rumor, increased by the thousand tongues of fame, brought intelligence that one of the greatest kings of Christendom had risen against him. Henry VIII, head of the house of Tudor, a prince descended from the families of York and Lancaster, and in whose person, after so much bloodshed, the red and white roses were at length united, the mighty king of England, who claimed to re-establish on the continent, and especially in France, the former influence of his crown, — had just written a book against the poor

monk of Wittenberg. “There is much boasting about a little book by the King of England,” wrote Luther to Lange on the 26th of June 1522. Henry was then thirty-one years old; “he was tall, strong-built and proportioned, and had an air of authority and empire.” His countenance expressed the vivacity of his mind; vehement, presuming the make everything give way to the violence of his passions, and thirsting for glory, he at first concealed his faults under a certain impetuosity that is peculiar to youth, and flatterers were not wanting to encourage them. He would often visit, in company with his courtiers, the house of his chaplain, Thomas Wolsey, the son of an Ipswich butcher. Endowed with great skill, of overweening ambition, and of unbounded audacity, this man, protected by the Bishop of Winchester, chancellor of the kingdom, had rapidly advanced in his master’s favor, and allured him to his residence by the attractions of pleasures and disorders, in which the young prince would not have ventured to indulge in his own palace. This is recorded by Polydore Virgil, at that time papal sub-collector in England. In these dissolute meetings, the chaplain

surpassed the licentiousness of the young courtiers who attended Henry VIII. Forgetful of the decorum befitting a minister of the Church, he would sing, dance, laugh, play the fool, fence, and indulge in obscene conversation. By these means he succeeded in obtaining the first place in the king's councils, and, as sole minister, all the princes of Christendom were forced to purchase his favor.

Henry lived in the midst of balls, banquets, and jousting, and madly squandered the treasures his father had slowly accumulated. Magnificent tournaments succeeded each other without interval. In these sports the king, who was distinguished above all the combatants by his manly beauty, played the chief part. If the contest appeared for a moment doubtful, the strength and address of the young monarch, or the artful policy of his opponents, gave him the victory, and the lists resounded with shouts and applause in his honor. The vanity of the youthful prince was inflated by these easy triumphs, and there was no success in the world to which he thought he might not aspire. The queen was often seen among the spectators.

Her serious features and sad look, her absent and dejected air, contrasted strongly with the noise and glitter of these festivities. Shortly after his accession to the throne, Henry VIII had espoused for reasons of state Catherine of Aragon, his senior by eight years: she was his brother Arthur's widow, and aunt to Charles V. While her husband followed his pleasures, the virtuous Catherine, whose piety was truly Spanish, would leave her bed in the middle of the night to take a silent part in the prayers of the monks. She would kneel down without cushion or carpet. At five in the morning, after taking a little rest, she would again rise, and putting on the Franciscan dress, for she had been admitted into the tertiary order of St. Francis, and hastily throwing the royal garments around her, would repair to church at six o'clock to join in the service.

Two beings, living in such different spheres, could not long continue together.

Romish piety had other representatives besides Catherine in the court of Henry VIII. John Fisher,

bishop of Rochester, then nearly seventy years of age, as distinguished for learning as for the austerity of his manners, was the object of universal veneration. He had been the oldest councillor of Henry VII, and the Duchess of Richmond, grandmother to Henry VIII, calling him to her bedside, had commended to his care the youth and inexperience of her grandson. The king, in the midst of his irregularities, long continued to revere the aged bishop as a father.

A man much younger than Fisher, a layman and lawyer, had before this attracted general attention by his genius and noble character. His name was Thomas More, son of one of the judges of the King's Bench. He was poor, austere, and diligent. At the age of twenty he had endeavored to quench the passions of youth by wearing a shirt of haircloth, and by self-scourging.

On one occasion, being summoned by Henry VIII while he was attending mass, he replied, that God's service was before the king's. Wolsey introduced him to Henry, who employed him on

various embassies, and showed him much kindness. He would often send for him, and converse with him on astronomy, on Wolsey, and on divinity.

In truth, the king himself was not acquainted with the Romish doctrines. It would appear, that if Arthur had lived, Henry was destined for the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, tournaments, banquets, Elizabeth Blunt and others of his mistresses — all were mixed up in the mind and life of this prince, who had masses of his own composition sung in his chapel.

As soon as Henry had heard talk of Luther, he became indignant against him, and hardly was the decree of the Diet of Worms known in England, before he ordered the pontiff's bull against the reformer's works to be put in execution. On the 12th of May 1521, Thomas Wolsey, who, together with the office of chancellor of England, combined those of cardinal and legate of Rome, went in solemn procession to St. Paul's. This man, whose

pride had attained the highest pitch, thought himself the equal of kings. He used to sit in a chair of gold, sleep in a golden bed, and a cover of cloth of gold was spread on the table at his meals. On this occasion he displayed great magnificence. His household, consisting of 800 persons, among whom were barons, knights, and sons of the most distinguished families, who hoped by serving him to obtain public office, surrounded this haughty prelate. Silk and gold glittered not only on his garments (he was the first ecclesiastic who ventured to dress so sumptuously), but even on the housings and harness of the horses. Before walked a tall priest bearing a silver column terminated by a cross; behind him, another ecclesiastic of similar height carried the archiepiscopal crosier of York; a nobleman at his side held the cardinal’s hat. Lords, prelates, ambassadors from the pope and emperor, accompanied him, followed by a long line of mules bearing chests covered with the richest and most brilliant hangings. It was this magnificent procession that was carrying to the burning pile the writings of the poor monk of Wittenberg. When they reached the cathedral, the insolent priest

placed his cardinal's hat on the alter. The virtuous Bishop of Rochester stationed himself at the foot of the cross, and with agitated voice preached earnestly against the heresy. After this the impious books of the heresiarch were brought together and devoutly burned in the presence of an immense crowd. Such was the first intelligence that England received of the Reformation.

Henry would not stop here. This prince, whose hand was ever upraised against his adversaries, his wives, or his favorites, wrote to the electorpalatine: "It is the devil, who, by Luther's means, has kindled this immense conflagration. If Luther will not be converted, let him and his writings be burnt together!" This was not enough. Having been convinced that the progress of heresy was owing to the extreme ignorance of the German princes, Henry thought the moment had arrived for showing his learning. The victories of his battle-axe did not permit him to doubt of those that were reserved for his pen. But another passion, vanity, ever greatest in the smallest minds, spurred the king onward. He was humiliated at having no title to oppose to that

of “Catholic,” and “Most Christian,” borne by the kings of Spain and France, and he had long been begging a similar distinction from the court of Rome. What would be more likely to procure it than to attack upon heresy? Henry therefore threw aside the kingly purple, and descended from his throne into the arena of theological discussion. He enlisted Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard, Alexander Hales, and Bonaventure into his service; and the world beheld the publication of the Defence of the Seven Sacraments, against Martin Luther, by the most invincible King of England and France, Lord of Ireland, Henry the eighth of that name.

“I will rush in front of the Church to save her,” said the King of England in this treatise; “I will receive in my bosom the poisoned arrows of her assailants. The present state of things calls me to do so. Every servant of Christ, whatever be his age, sex, or rank, should rise up against the common enemy of Christendom. “Let us put on a twofold breastplate; the heavenly breastplate, to conquer by the weapons of truth him who combats with those

of error; but also an earthly breastplate, that if he shows himself obstinate in his malice, the hand of the executioner may constrain him to be silent, and that once at least he may be useful to the world, by the terrible example of his death." Henry VIII was unable to hide the contempt he felt towards his feeble adversary. "This man," said the crowned theologian, "seems to be in the pangs of childbirth; after a travail without precedent, he produces nothing but wind. Remove the daring envelope of the insolent verbiage with which he clothes his absurdities, as an ape is clothed in purple, and what remains?.....a wretched and empty sophism." The king defends, successively, the mass, penance, confirmation, marriage, orders, and extreme unction; he is not sparing of abusive language towards his opponent; he calls him by turns a wolf of hell, a poisonous viper, a limb of the devil. Even Luther's sincerity is attacked. Henry VIII crushes the mendicant monk with his royal anger, "and writes as 'twere with his scepter," says an historian. And yet it must be confessed that his work was not bad, considering the author and his age. The style is not altogether without force; but

the public of the day did not confine themselves to paying it due justice. The theological treatise of the powerful King of England was received with a torrent of adulation. “The most learned work the sun ever saw,” cried some. — “We can only compare it,” re-echoed others, “to the works of Augustine. He is a Constantine, a Charlemagne!” — “He is more,” said others, “he is a second Solomon!” These flatteries soon extended beyond the limits of England. Henry desired John Clarke, dean of Windsor, his ambassador at Rome, to present his book to the sovereign pontiff. Leo X received the envoy in full consistory.

Clarke laid the royal work before him, saying: “The king my master assures you that, having now refuted Luther’s errors with the pen, he is ready to combat his adherents with the sword.” Leo, touched with this promise, replied, that the king’s book could not have been written without the aid of the Holy Ghost, and conferred upon Henry the title of Defender of the Faith, which is still borne by the sovereigns of England.

The reception which this volume met with at Rome contributed greatly to increase the number of its readers. In a few months many thousand copies issued from different presses. “The whole christian world,” says Cochloeus, “was filled with admiration and joy.” Such extravagant panegyrics augmented the insufferable vanity of this chief of the Tudors. He himself seemed to have no doubt that he was inspired by the Holy Ghost. From that time he would suffer no contradiction.

His papacy was no longer at Rome, but at Greenwich; infallibility reposed on his shoulders: at a subsequent period this contributed greatly to the Reformation of England.

Luther read Henry’s book with a smile mingled with disdain, impatience, and indignation. The falsehood and the abuse it contained, but especially the air of contempt and compassion which the king assumed, irritated the Wittenberg doctor to the highest degree. The thought that the pope had crowned this work, and that on all sides the enemies of the Gospel were triumphing over the

Reformation and the reformer as already overthrown and vanquished, increased his indignation. Besides, what reason had he to temporize? Was he not fighting in the cause of a King greater than all the kings of the earth? The meekness of the Gospel appeared to him unseasonable. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. He went beyond all bounds. Persecuted, insulted, hunted down, wounded, the furious lion turned round, and proudly roused himself to crush his enemy. The elector, Spalatin, Melancthon, and Bugenhagen, strove in vain to pacify him. They would have prevented his replying; but nothing could stop him. “I will not be gentle towards the King of England,” said he. “I know that it is vain for me to humble myself, to give way, to entreat, to try peaceful methods. At length I will show myself more terrible towards these furious beasts, who goad me every day with their horns. I will turn mine upon them. I will provoke Satan until he falls down lifeless and exhausted. If this heretic does not recant, says Henry VIII the new Thomas, he must be burnt alive!

Such are the weapons they are not employing against me: the fury of stupid asses and swine of the brood of Thomas Aquinas; and then the stake. Well then, be it so! Let these hogs advance if they dare, and let them burn me! Here I am waiting for them. After my death, though my ashes should be thrown into a thousand seas, they will rise, pursue, and swallow up this abominable herd. Living, I shall be the enemy of the papacy; burnt, I shall be its destruction. Go then, swine of St. Thomas, do what seemeth good to you. You will ever find Luther like a bear upon your way, and as a lion in your path. He will spring upon you whithersoever you go, and will never leave you at peace, until he has broken your iron heads, and ground your brazen foreheads into dust." Luther first reproaches Henry VIII with having supported his doctrines solely by the decrees and opinions of men. "As for me," says he, "I never cease crying the Gospel, the Gospel! Christ, Christ! — And my adversaries continue to reply: Custom, custom! Ordinances, ordinances!

Fathers, fathers! — St. Paul says: Let not your

faith stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:5). And the apostle by this thunderclap from heaven overthrows and disperses, as the wind scatters the dust, all the hobgoblins of this Henry. Frightened and confounded, these Thomists, Papists, and Henrys fall prostrate before the thunder of these words." He then refutes the king's book in detail, and overturns his arguments one after the other, with a perspicuity, spirit, and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and history of the Church, but also with an assurance, disdain, and sometimes violence, that ought not to surprise us.

Having reached the end of his confutation, Luther again becomes indignant that his opponent should derive his arguments from the Fathers only: this was the basis of the whole controversy. "To all the world of the Father and of men, of angels and of devils," said he, "I oppose, not old customs, not the multitude of men, but the Word of Eternal Majesty, — the Gospel, which even my adversaries are obliged to recognize. To this I hold fast, on this I repose, in this I boast, in this I exult and triumph

over the papists, the Thomists, the Henrys, the sophists, and all the swine of hell. The King of heaven is with me; for this reason I fear nothing, although a thousand Augustines, a thousand Cyprians, and a thousand of these churches which Henry defends, should rise up against me. It is a small matter that I should despise and revile a king of the earth, since he himself does not fear in his writings to blaspheme the King of heaven, and to profane His holy name by the most impudent falsehoods." "Papists!" exclaimed he in conclusion, "will ye never cease from your idle attacks? Do what you please. Nevertheless, before that Gospel which I preach down must come popes, bishops, priests, monks, princes, devils, death, sin, and all that is not Christ or in Christ." Thus spoke the poor monk. His violence certainly cannot be excused, if we judge it by the rule to which he himself appealed, — by the Word of God.

It cannot even by justified by alleging either the grossness of the age (for Melancthon knew how to observe decorum in his writings), or the energy of his character, for if this energy had any influence

over his language, passion also exerted more. It is better, then, that we should condemn it.

And yet, that we may be just, we should observe decorum in his writings), or the energy of his character, for if this energy had any influence over his language, passion also exerted more. It is better, then, that we should condemn it. And yet, that we may be just, we should observe that in the sixteenth century this violence did not appear so strange as it would nowa- days. The learned were then an estate, as well as the princes. By becoming a writer, Henry had attacked Luther. Luther replied according to the established law in the republic of letters, that we must consider the truth of what is said, and not the quality of him that says it. Let us add also, that when this same king turned against the pope, the abuse which the Romish writers and the pope himself poured upon him, far exceeded all that Luther had ever said.

Besides, if Luther called Dr. Eck an ass and Henry VIII a hog, he indignantly rejected the intervention of the secular arm; while Eck was

writing a dissertation to prove that heretics ought to be burned, and Henry was erecting scaffolds that he might conform with the precepts of the chancellor of Ingolstadt.

Great was the emotion at the king's court; Surrey, Wolsey, and the crowd of courtiers, put a stop to the festivities and pageantry at Greenwich to vent their indignation in abuse and sarcasm. The venerable Bishop of Rochester, who had been delighted to see the young prince, formerly confided to his care, breaking a lance in defense of the Church, was deeply wounded by the attack of the monk. He replied to it immediately. His words distinctly characterize the age and the Church. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines, says Christ in the Song of Songs. This teaches us," said Fisher, "that we must take the heretics before they grow big. Now Luther is become a big fox, so old, so cunning, and so sly, that he is very difficult to catch. What do I say?.....a fox? He is a mad dog, a ravening wolf, a cruel bear; or rather all those animals in one; for the monster includes many beasts within him."

Thomas More also descended into the arena to contend with the monk of Wittenberg. Although a layman, his zeal against the Reformation amounted to fanaticism, if it did not even urge him to shed blood. When young nobles undertake the defense of the papacy, their violence often exceeds even that of the ecclesiastics. “Reverend brother, father, tippler, Luther, runagate of the order of St. Augustine, misshapen bacchanal of either faculty, unlearned doctor of theology.” Such is the language addressed to the reformer by one of the most illustrious men of his age. He then proceeds to explain the manner in which Luther had composed his book against Henry VIII: “He called his companions together, and desired them to go each his own way and pick up all sorts of abuse and scurrility. One frequented the public carriages and boats; another the baths and gambling-houses; a third the taverns and barbers’ shops; a fourth the mills and brothels. They noted down in their tablets all the most insolent, filthy, and infamous things they heard; and bringing back all these abominations and impurities, they discharged them into that filthy kennel which is called Luther’s

mind. If he retracts his falsehoods and calumnies," continues More, "if he lays aside his folly and his madness, if he swallows his own filth .....he will find one who will seriously discuss with him. But if he proceeds as he has begun, joking, teasing, fooling, calumniating, vomiting sewers and cesspools .....let others do what they please; as for me, I should prefer leaving the little friar to his won fury and filth." More would have done better to have restrained his own. Luther never degraded his style to so low a degree. He made no reply.

This writing still further increased Henry's attachment to More. He would often visit him in his humble dwelling at Chelsea. After dinner, the king, leaning on his favorite's shoulder, would walk in the garden, while Mistress More and her children, concealed behind a window, could not turn away their astonished eyes. After one of these walks, More, who knew his man well, said to his wife: "If my head could win him a single castle in France, he would not hesitate to cut it off." The king, thus defended by the Bishop of Rochester and by his future chancellor, had no need to resume his

pen. Confounded at finding himself treated in the face of Europe as a common writer, Henry VIII abandoned the dangerous position he had taken, and throwing away the pen of the theologian, had recourse to the more effectual means of diplomacy.

An ambassador was despatched from the court of Greenwich with a letter for the elector and dukes of Saxony. “Luther, the real serpent fallen from heaven,” wrote he, “is pouring out his floods of venom upon the earth. He is stirring up revolts in the Church of Jesus Christ, abolishing laws, insulting the powers that be, inflaming the laity against the priests, and laymen and priests against the pope, subjects against their sovereigns, and desires nothing better than to see Christians fighting and destroying one another, and the enemies of our faith hailing this scene of carnage with a frightful grin. “What is this doctrine which he calls evangelical, if it be not Wickliffe’s? Now, most honored uncles, I know what your ancestors have done to destroy it. In Bohemia they hunted it down like a wild beast, and driving it into a pit, they shut it up and kept it fast. You will not allow it

to escape through your negligence, lest, creeping into Saxony, and becoming master of the whole of Germany, its smoking nostrils should pour forth the flames of hell, spreading that conflagration far and wide which your nation hath so often wished to extinguish in its blood. “For this reason, most worthy princes, I feel obliged to exhort you and even to entreat you in the name of all that is most sacred, promptly to extinguish the cursed sect of Luther: put no one to death, if that can be avoided; but if this heretical obstinacy continues, then shed blood without hesitation, in order that the abominable heresy may disappear from under heaven. The elector and his brother referred the kings to the approaching council. Thus Henry VIII was far from attaining his end. “So great a name mixed up in the dispute,” said Paul Sarpi, “served to render it more curious, and to conciliate general favor towards Luther, as usually happens in combats and tournaments, where the spectators have always a leaning to the weaker party, and take delight in exaggerating the merit of his actions.”

Chapter 11

General Movement

A great movement was going on. The Reformation, which, after the Diet of Worms, had been thought to be confined with its first teacher in the narrow chamber of a strong castle, was breaking forth in every part of the empire, and, so to speak, throughout Christendom. The two classes, hitherto mixed up together, were now beginning to separate; and the partisans of a monk, whose only defense was his tongue, now took their stand fearlessly in the face of the servants of Charles V and Leo X. Luther had scarcely left the walls of the Wartburg, the pope had excommunicated all his adherents, the imperial diet had just condemned his doctrine, the princes were endeavoring to crush it in most of the German states, the ministers of Rome were lowering it in the eyes of the people by their violent invectives, the other states of Christendom were calling upon Germany to sacrifice a man whose assaults they feared even at a distance; and yet this new sect, few in numbers,

and among whose members there was no organization, no bond of union, nothing in short that concentrated their common power, was already frightening the vast, ancient, and powerful sovereignty of Rome by the energy of its faith and the rapidity of its conquests. On all sides, as in the first warm days of spring, the seed was bursting from the earth spontaneously and without effort. Every day showed some new progress. Individuals, villages, towns, whole cities, joined in this new confession of the name of Jesus Christ. There was unpitying opposition, there were terrible persecutions, but the mysterious power that urged forward all these people was irresistible; and the persecuted, quickening their steps, going forward through exile, imprisonment, and the burning pile, everywhere prevailed over their persecutors.

The monastic orders that Rome had spread over Christendom, like a net intended to catch souls and keep them prisoners, were the first to break their bonds, and rapidly to propagate the new doctrine throughout the Church. The Augustines of Saxony had walked with Luther, and felt that inward

experience of the Holy Word which, by putting them in possession of God himself, dethroned Rome and her lofty assumptions. But in the other convents of the order, evangelical light had dawned in like manner.

Sometimes they were old men, who, like Staupitz, had preserved the sound doctrines of truth in the midst of deluded Christendom, and who now besought God to permit them to depart in peace, for their eyes had seen his salvation. At other times, they were young men, who had received Luther’s teaching with the eagerness peculiar to their age. The Augustine convents at Nuremberg, Osnabruck, Dillingen, Ratisbon, Strasburg, and Antwerp, with those in Hesse and Wurtemberg, turned towards Jesus Christ, and by their courage excited the wrath of Rome.

But this movement was not confined to the Augustines only. High-spirited men imitated them in the monasteries of other orders, and notwithstanding the clamors of the monks, who would not abandon their carnal observances,

notwithstanding the anger, contempt, sentences, discipline, and imprisonments of the cloister, they fearlessly raised their voices in behalf of that holy and precious truth, which they had found at last after so many painful inquiries, such despair and doubt, and such inward struggle. In the majority of the cloisters, the most spiritual, pious, and learned monks declared for the Reformation. In the Franciscan convent at Ulm, Eberlin, and Kettenbach attacked the slavish works of monasticism, and the superstitious observances of the Church, with an eloquence capable of moving the whole nation; and they called for the immediate abolition of the monasteries and houses of ill-fame. Another Franciscan, Stephen Kempe, preached the Gospel at Hamburg, and, alone, presented a firm front to the hatred, envy, menaces, snares, and attacks of the priests, who were irritated at seeing the crowd abandon their altars, and flock with enthusiasm to hear his sermons. Frequently the superiors of the convents were the first led away in the path of reform. At Halberstadt, Neuenwerk, Halle, and Sagan, the priors set the example to their monks, or at least declared that if a monk felt his

conscience burdened by the weight of monastic vows, far from detaining him in the convent, they would take him by the shoulders and thrust him out of doors. Indeed throughout all Germany the monks were seen laying down their frocks and cowls at the gates of the monasteries. Some were expelled by the violence of the brethren or the abbots; others, of mild and pacific character, could no longer endure the continual disputes, abuse, clamor, and hatred which pursued them even in their slumbers; the majority were convinced that the monastic life was opposed to the will of God and to a christian life; some had arrived at this conviction by degrees; others suddenly, by reading a passage in the Bible. The sloth, grossness, ignorance, and degradation that constituted the very nature of the mendicant orders, inspired with indescribable disgust all men of elevated mind, who could not longer support the society of their vulgar associates.

One day, a Franciscan going his rounds, stopped with the box in his hand begging alms at a blacksmith’s forge in Nuremberg: “Why,” said the

smith, “do you not gain your bread by the work of your own hands?” At these words the sturdy monk threw away his staff, and seizing the hammer plied it vigorously on the anvil. The useless mendicant had become and honest workman. His box and frock were sent back to the monastery. The monks were not the only persons who rallied round the standard of the Gospel; priests in still greater number began to preach the new doctrines. But preachers were not required for its propagation; it frequently acted on men’s minds, and aroused them from their deep slumber without any one having spoken.

Luther’s writings were read in cities, towns, and even villages; at night by the fireside the schoolmaster would often read them aloud to an attentive audience. Some of the hearers were affected by their perusal; they would take up the Bible to clear away their doubts, and were struck with surprise at the astonishing contrast between the Christianity of the Bible and their own. After oscillating between Rome and Scripture, they soon took refuge with that living Word which shed so

new and sweet a radiance on their hearts. While they were in this state, some evangelical preacher, probably a priest or a monk, would arrive. He spoke eloquently and with conviction; he announced that Christ had made full atonement for the sins of his people; he demonstrated by Holy Scripture the vanity of works and human penances. A terrible opposition would then break out; the clergy, and sometimes the magistrates, would strain every nerve to bring back the souls they were about to lose. But there was in the new preaching a harmony with Scripture and a hidden force that won all hearts, and subdued even the most rebellious. At the peril of their goods, and of their life if need be, they ranged themselves on the side of the Gospel, and forsook the lifeless and fanatical orators of the papacy. Sometimes the people, incenses at being so long misled, compelled them to retire; more frequently the priests, deserted by their flocks, without tithes or offerings, departed voluntarily and in sadness to seek a livelihood elsewhere. And while the supporters of the ancient hierarchy returned from these places sorrowful and dejected, and sometimes bidding farewell to their

old flocks in the language of anathema, the people, transported with joy by peace and liberty, surrounded the new preachers with their applause, and, thirsting for the Word of God, carried them in triumph into the church and into the pulpit. A word of power, proceeding from God, was at that time regenerating society. The people, or their leaders, would frequently invite some man celebrated for his faith to come and enlighten them; and instantly, for love of the Gospel, he abandoned his interests and his family, his country and friends. The persecution often compelled the partisans of the Reformation to leave their homes: they reached some spot where it was as yet unknown; here they would enter a house that offered an asylum to poor travelers; there they would speak of the Gospel, read a chapter to the attentive hearers, and perhaps, at the request of their new friends, obtained permission to preach once publicly in the church.....Upon this a vast uproar would break out in the city, and the greatest exertions were ineffectual to quench it. If they could not preach in the church, they found some other spot. Every place became a temple. At Husum in Holstein,

Hermann Tast, who was returning from Wittenberg, and against whom the clergy of the parish had closed the church doors, preached to an immense crowd in the cemetery, beneath the shade of two large trees, not far from the spot where, seven centuries before, Anschar had proclaimed the Gospel to the heathen. At Arnstadt, Gaspard Guttel, an Augustine monk, preached in the market-place. At Dantzie, the Gospel was announced on a little hill outside of the city. At Gosslar, a Wittenberg student taught the new doctrines in a meadow planted with lime-trees; whence the evangelical Christians were denominated the Lime-tree Brethren.

While the priests were exhibiting a sordid covetousness before the eyes of the people, the new preachers said to them, “Freely we have received, freely do we give.” The idea often published by the new preachers from the pulpit, that Rome had formerly sent the Germans a corrupted Gospel, and that now for the first time Germany heard the Word of Christ in its heavenly and primal beauty, produced a deep impression on men’s minds. And

the noble thought of the equality of all men, of a universal brotherhood in Jesus Christ, laid strong hold upon those souls which for so long a period had groaned beneath the yoke of feudalism and of the papacy of the Middle Ages. Often would unlearned Christians, with the New Testament in their hands, undertake to justify the doctrine of the Reformation. The catholics who remained faithful to Rome withdrew in affright; for to priests and monks alone had been assigned the task of studying sacred literature. The latter were therefore compelled to come forward; the conference began; but erelong, overwhelmed by the declarations of Holy Scripture cited by these laymen, the priests and monks knew not how to reply. ....."Unhappily Luther had persuaded his followers," says Cochloeus, "to put no faith in any other oracle than the Holy Scriptures." A shout was raised in the assembly, and proclaimed the scandalous ignorance of these old theologians, who had hitherto been reputed such great scholars by their own party. Men of the lowest station, and even the weaker sex, with the aid of God's Word, persuaded and led away men's hearts. Extraordinary works

are the result of extraordinary times. At Ingolstadt, under the eyes of Dr. Eck, a young weaver read Luther's works to the assembled crowd. In this very city, the university having resolved to compel a disciple of Melancthon to retract, a woman, named Argula de Staufen, undertook his defense, and challenged the doctors to a public disputation. Women and children, artisans and soldiers, knew more of the Bible than the doctors of the schools or the priests of the altars.

Christendom was divided into two hostile bodies, and their aspects were strikingly contrasted. Opposed to the old champions of the hierarchy, who had neglected the study of languages and the cultivation of literature (as one of their own body informs us), were generous-minded youths, devoted to study, investigating Scripture, and familiarizing themselves with the masterpieces of antiquity. Possessing an active mind, an elevated soul, and intrepid heart, these young men soon acquired such knowledge, that for a long period none could compete with them. It was not only the vitality of their faith which rendered the superior to

their contemporaries, but an elegance of style, a perfume of antiquity, a sound philosophy, a knowledge of the world, completely foreign to the theologians “of the old leaven,” as Cochloeus himself terms them. Accordingly, when these youthful defenders of the Reformation met the Romish doctors in any assembly, they attacked them with such ease and confidence, that these ignorant men hesitated, became embarrassed, and fell into a contempt merited in the eyes of all.

The ancient edifice was crumbling under the load of superstition and ignorance; the new one was rising on the foundations of faith and knowledge. New elements entered deep into the lives of the people.

Torpor and dulness were in all parts succeeded by a spirit of inquiry and a thirst for instruction. An active, enlightened, and living faith took the place of superstitious devotion and ascetic meditations. Works of piety succeeded bigoted observances and penances. The pulpit prevailed over the ceremonies of the altar; and the ancient and sovereign authority

of God’s Word was at length restored in the Church.

The printing-press, that powerful machine discovered in the fifteenth century, came to the support of all these exertions, and its terrible missiles were continually battering the walls of the enemy.

The impulse which the Reformation gave to popular literature in Germany was immense. While in the year 1513 only thirty-five publications had appeared, and thirty-seven in 1517, the number of books increased with astonishing rapidity after the appearance of Luther’s theses. In 1518 we find seventyone different works; in 1519, one hundred and eleven; in 1520, two hundred and eight; in 1521, two hundred and eleven; in 1522, three hundred and forty-seven; and in, four hundred and ninetyeight.....

And where were all these published? For the most part at Wittenberg. And who were their authors? Generally Luther and his friends.

In 1522 one hundred and thirty of the reformer's writings were published; and in the year following, one hundred and eighty-three. In this same year only twenty Roman-catholic publications appeared. The literature of Germany thus saw the light in the midst of struggles, and contemporaneously with her religion. Already it appeared learned, profound, full of daring and life, as later times have seen it. The national spirit showed itself for the first time without mixture, and at the very moment of its birth received the baptism of fire from christian enthusiasm.

What Luther and his friends composed, others circulated. Monks, convinced of the unlawfulness of monastic obligations, desirous of exchanging a long life of slothfulness for one of active exertion, but too ignorant to proclaim the Word of God, traveled through the provinces, visiting hamlets and cottages, where they sold the books of Luther and his friends. Germany soon swarmed with these bold colporteurs. Printers and booksellers eagerly welcomed every writing in defense of the

Reformation; but they rejected the books of the opposite party, as generally full of ignorance and barbarism. If any one of them ventured to sell a book in favor of the papacy, and offered it for sale in the fairs at Frankfort or elsewhere, merchants, purchasers, and men of letters overwhelmed him with ridicule and sarcasm. It was in vain that the emperor and princes had published severe edicts against the writings of the reformers. As soon as an inquisitorial visit was to be paid, the dealers who had received secret intimation concealed the books that it was intended to proscribe; and the multitude, ever eager for what is prohibited, immediately bought them up, and read them with the greater avidity. It was not only in Germany that such scenes were passing; Luther’s writings were translated into French, Spanish, English, and Italian, and circulated among these nations.

Chapter 12

Luther at Zwickau

If the most puny instruments inflicted such terrible blows on Rome, what was it when the voice of the monk of Wittenberg was heard? Shortly after the discomfiture of the new prophets, Luther, in a layman's attire, traversed the territories of Duke George in a wagon. His gown was hidden, and the reformer seemed to be a plain citizen of the country. If he had been recognized, if he had fallen into the hands of the exasperated duke, perhaps his fate would have been sealed. He was going to preach at Zwickau, the birthplace of the pretended prophets. It was no sooner known at Schneeberg, Annaberg, and the surrounding places, that the people crowded around him. Fourteen thousand persons flocked into the city, and as there was no church that could contain such numbers, Luther went into the balcony of the town-hall, and preached before an audience of twentyfive thousand persons who thronged the market-place, some of whom had mounted on heaps of cut stones

piled up near the building. The servant of God was dilating with fervor on the election of grace, when suddenly cries were heard from the midst of the auditory. An old woman of haggard mein stretched out her emaciated arms from the stone on which she had taken her station, and seemed desirous of restraining with her fleshless hands that crowd which was about to fall prostrate at the feet of Jesus. Her wild yells interrupted the preacher. “It was the devil,” said Seckendorff, “who had taken the form of an old woman in order to excite a disturbance.” But it was all in vain; the reformer’s words silenced the wicked spirit; these thousands of hearers caught his enthusiasm; glances of admiration were exchanged; hands were warmly grasped, and erelong the tongue-tied monks, unable to avert the storm, found it necessary to leave Zwickau.

In the castle of Freyberg dwelt Henry, brother of Duke George. His wife, a princess of Mecklenburg, had the preceding year borne him a son who had been named Maurice. With a fondness for the table and for pleasure, Duke Henry

combined the rudeness and coarse manners of a soldier. In other respects, he was pious after the fashion of the times, had gone to the Holy Land, and made a pilgrimage to St. Iago of Compostella. He would often say: “At Compostella I placed a hundred golden florins of the altar of the saint, and said to him: O St. Iago, to please thee I came hither; I make thee a present of this money; but if these knaves (the priests) take it from thee, I cannot help it; so be on your guard.” A Franciscan and a Dominican, both disciples of Luther, had been for some time preaching the Gospel at Freyberg. The duchess, whose piety had inspired her with a horror of heresy, listened to their sermons which astonishment that this gentle word of a Savior was the object she had been taught to fear. Gradually her eyes were opened, and she found peace in Christ Jesus. No sooner had Duke George learnt that the Gospel was preached at Freyberg, than he entreated his brother to oppose these novelties. Chancellor Strehlin and the canons seconded his prayer with their fanaticism. A violent explosion took place in the court of Freyberg.

Duke Henry harshly reprimanded and reproached his wife, and more than once the pious duchess watered her child’s cradle with her tears. Yet by degrees her prayers and gentleness won the heart of her husband; the rough man was softened; harmony was restored between the married pair, and they were enabled to join in prayer beside their sleeping babe. Great destinies were hovering over that child; and from that cradle, where a christian mother had so often poured forth her sorrows, God was one day to bring forth the liberator of the Reformation.

Luther’s intrepidity had excited the inhabitants of Worms. The imperial decree terrified the magistrates; all the churches were closed; but in a public place, filled by an immense crowd, a preacher ascended a rudely constructed pulpit, and proclaimed the Gospel with persuasive accents. If the authorities showed a disposition to interfere, the hearers dispersed in a moment, and stealthily carried away the pulpit; but the storm was no sooner passed, than it was immediately set up on some more secluded spot, to which the crowd again

flocked to hear the Word of Christ. This temporary pulpit was every day carried from one place to another, and served to encourage the people, still agitated by the emotions of the great drama lately performed in their city. At Frankfort on the Maine, one of the principal free cities of the empire, all was in commotion. A courageous evangelist, Ibach, preached salvation by Jesus Christ. The clergy, among whom was Cochloeus, so notorious by his writings and his opposition, irritated against this audacious colleague, denounced him to the Archbishop of Mentz. The council undertook his defense, although with timidity, but to no purpose, for the clergy discharged the evangelical minister, and compelled him to leave the town.

Rome triumphed; everything seemed lost; the poor believers fancied themselves for ever deprived of the Word; but at the very moment when the citizens appeared inclined to yield to these tyrannical priests, many nobles declared for the Gospel. Max of Molnheim, Harmuth of Cronberg, George of Stockheim, and Emeric of Reiffenstein, whose estates lay near Frankfort,

wrote to the council: “We are constrained to rise up against these spiritual wolves.” And addressing the clergy, they said: “Embrace the evangelical doctrine, recall Ibach, or else we will refuse to pay our tithes!” The people, who listened gladly to the Reformation, being encouraged by the language of the nobles, began to put themselves in motion; and one day, just as Peter Mayer, the persecutor of Ibach and the most determined enemy of the reform, was going to preach against the heretics, a great uproar was heard. Mayer was alarmed, and hastily quitted the church.

This movement decided the council. All the preachers were enjoined by proclamation to preach the pure Word of God, or the leave the city.

The light which proceeded from Wittenberg, as from the heart of the nation, was thus shedding its rays through the whole empire. In the west, — Berg, Cleves, Lippstadt, Munster, Wesel, Miltenberg, Mentz, Deux Ponts, and Strasburg, listened to the Gospel; on the south, — Hof, Schlesstadt, Bamberg, Esslingen, Halle in Swabia,

Heilbrunn, Augsburg, Ulm, and many other places, received it with joy. In the east, — the duchy of Liegnitz, Prussia, and Pomerania opened their gates to it; and in the north, — Brunswick, Halberstadt, Gosslar, Zell, Friesland, Bremen, Hamburg, Holstein, and even Denmark, with other neighboring countries, were moved at the sounds of this new doctrine.

The Elector Frederick had declared that he would allow the bishops to preach freely in his states, but that he would deliver no one into their hands. Accordingly, the evangelical teachers, persecuted in other countries, soon took refuge in Saxony. Ibach of Frankfort, Eberlin of Ulm, Kauxdorf of Magdeburg, Valentine Mustoeus, whom the canons of Halberstadt had horribly mutilated, and other faithful ministers, coming from all parts of Germany, fled to Wittenberg, as the only asylum in which they could be secure. Here they conversed with the reformers; at their feet they strengthened themselves in the faith; and communicated to them their own experience and the knowledge they had acquired. It is thus the

waters of the rivers return by the clouds from the vast expanse of the ocean, to feed the glaciers whence they first descended to the plains.

The work which was evolving at Wittenberg, and formed in this manner of many different elements, became more and more the work of the nation, of Europe, and of Christendom. This school, founded by Frederick, and quickened by Luther, was the center of an immense revolution which regenerated the Church, and impressed on it a real and living unity far superior to the apparent unity of Rome. The Bible reigned at Wittenberg, and its oracles were heard on all sides. This academy, the most recent of all, had acquired that rank and influence in Christendom which had hitherto belonged to the ancient university of Paris. The crowds that flocked thither from every part of Europe made known the wants of the Church and of the nations; and as they quitted these walls, now become holy to them, they carried back with them to the Church and the people of the Word of Grace appointed to heal and to save the nations.

Luther, as he witnessed this success, felt his confidence increase. He beheld this feeble undertaking, begun in the midst of so many fears and struggles, changing the aspect of the christian world, and was himself astonished at the result. He had foreseen nothing of the kind, when first he rose up against Tetzel. Prostrate before the God whom he adored, he confessed the work to be His, and exulted in the assurance of a victory that could not be torn from him. “Our enemies threaten us with death,” said he to Harmuth of Cronberg; “if they had as much wisdom as foolishness, they would, on the contrary, threaten us with life. What an absurdity and insult to presume to threaten death to Christ and Christians, who are themselves lords and conquerors of death! .....It is as if I would seek to frighten a man by saddling his horse and helping him to mount. Do they not know that Christ is risen from the dead? In their eyes He is still lying in the sepulcher; nay more — in hell. But we know that He lives.” He was grieved at the thought that he was regarded as the author of a work, in the smallest details of which he beheld the hand of God. “Many believe because of me,” said he. “But

those alone truly believe, who would continue faithful even should they hear (which God forbid!) that I had denied Jesus Christ. True disciples believe not in Luther, but in Jesus Christ. As for myself, I do not care about Luther. “Whether he is a saint or a knave, what matters it? It is not he that I preach; but Christ. If the devil can take him, let him do so! But let Christ abide with us, and we shall abide also.” And vainly, indeed, would men endeavor to explain this great movement by mere human circumstances. Men of letters, it is true, sharpened their wits and discharged their keen-pointed arrows against the pope and the monks; the shout of liberty, which Germany had so often raised against the tyranny of the Italians, again resounded in the castles and provinces; the people were delighted with the song of “the nightingale of Wittenberg,” a herald of the spring that was everywhere bursting forth. But it was not a mere outward movement, similar to that effected by a longing for earthly liberty, that was then accomplishing. Those who assert that the Reformation was brought about by bribing princes with the wealth of the convents, — the priests with

permission to marry, — and the people with the prospect of freedom, are strangely mistaken in its nature. No doubt a useful employment of the funds that had hitherto supported the sloth of the monks; no doubt marriage and liberty, gifts that proceed direct from God, might have favored the development of the Reformation; but the mainspring was not there. An interior revolution was then going on in the depths of the human heart. Christians were again learning to love, to pardon, to pray, to suffer, and even to die for a truth that offered no repose save in heaven. The Church was passing through a state of transformation. Christianity was bursting the bonds in which it had so long been confined, and returning in life and vigor into a world that had forgotten its ancient power. The hand that made the world was turned towards it again; and the Gospel, reappearing in the midst of the nations, accelerated its course, notwithstanding the violent and repeated efforts of priests and kings; like the ocean which, when the hand of God presses on its surface, rises calm and majestic along its shores, so that no human power is able to resist its progress.