

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE



HISTORY OF PROTESTANTISM

VOL. 1

JAMES A. WYLIE

History of Protestantism

Volume 1

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Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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**Book 1: Progress from the First to the
Fourteenth Century**

Chapter 1: Protestantism

Protestantism—The Seed of Arts, Letters, Free States, etc—Its History a Grand Drama—Its Origin—Outside Humanity—A Great Creative Power—Protestantism Revived Christianity

Picture: Luther before the Diet at Worms

Picture: Calvin refusing the Lord's Supper to the Libertines

The History of Protestantism, which we propose to write, is no mere history of dogmas. The teachings of Christ are the seeds; the modern Christendom, with its new life, is the goodly tree which has sprung from them. We shall speak of the seed and then of the tree, so small at its beginning, but destined one day to cover the earth.

[2] How that seed was deposited in the soil; how the tree grew up and flourished despite the furious tempests that warred around it; how, century after century, it lifted its top higher in heaven, and spread its boughs wider around, sheltering liberty, nursing letters, fostering art, and gathering a fraternity of prosperous and powerful nations around it, it will be our business in the following pages to show. Meanwhile we wish it to be noted that this is what we understand by the Protestantism on the history of which we are now entering. Viewed thus - and any narrower view would be untrue alike to philosophy and to fact - the History of Protestantism is the record of one of the grandest dramas of all time.

It is true, no doubt, that Protestantism, strictly viewed, is simply a principle. It is not a policy. It is not an empire, having its fleets and armies, its officers and tribunals, wherewith to extend its dominion and make its authority be obeyed. It is not even a Church with its hierarchies, and synods and edicts; it is simply a principle. But it is the greatest of all principles. It is a creative power. Its plastic influence is all-embracing. It penetrates into the heart and renews the individual. It goes down to the depths and, by its omnipotent but noiseless energy, vivifies and regenerates society. It thus becomes the creator of all that is true, and lovely, and great; the founder of

free kingdoms, and the mother of pure churches. The globe itself it claims as a stage not too wide for the manifestation of its beneficent action; and the whole domain of terrestrial affairs it deems a sphere not too vast to fill with its spirit, and rule by its law.

Whence came this principle? The name Protestantism is very recent: the thing itself is very ancient. The term Protestantism is scarcely older than 350 years. It dates from the protest which the Lutheran princes gave in to the Diet of Spire in 1529. Restricted to its historical signification, Protestantism is purely negative. It only defines the attitude taken up, at a great historical era, by one party in Christendom with reference to another party. But had this been all, Protestantism would have had no history. Had it been purely negative, it would have begun and ended with the men who assembled at the German town in the year already specified. The new world that has come out of it is the proof that at the bottom of this protest was a great principle which it has pleased Providence to fertilize, and make the seed of those grand, beneficent, and enduring achievements which have made the past three centuries in many respects the most eventful and wonderful in history. The men who handed in this protest did not wish to create a mere void. If they disowned the creed and threw off the yoke of Rome, it was that they might plant a purer faith and restore the government of a higher Law. They replaced the authority of the Infallibility with the authority of the Word of God. The long and dismal obscurity of centuries they dispelled, that the twin stars of liberty and knowledge might shine forth, and that, conscience being unbound, the intellect might awake from its deep somnolency, and human society, renewing its youth, might, after its halt of a thousand years, resume its march towards its high goal.

We repeat the question - Whence came this principle? And we ask our readers to mark well the answer, for it is the key-note to the whole of our vast subject, and places us, at the very outset, at the springs of that long narration on which we are now entering.

Protestantism is not solely the outcome of human progress; it is no mere principle of perfectibility inherent in humanity, and ranking as one of its native powers, in virtue of which when society becomes corrupt it can purify itself, and when it is arrested in its course by some external force, or stops from exhaustion, it can recruit its

energies and set forward anew on its path. It is neither the product of the individual reason, nor the result of the joint thought and energies of the species. Protestantism is a principle which has its origin outside human society: it is a Divine graft on the intellectual and moral nature of man, whereby new vitalities and forces are introduced into it, and the human stem yields henceforth a nobler fruit. It is the descent of a heaven-born influence which allies itself with all the instincts and powers of the individual, with all the laws and cravings of society, and which, quickening both the individual and the social being into a new life, and directing their efforts to nobler objects, permits the highest development of which humanity is capable, and the fullest possible accomplishment of all its grand ends. In a word, Protestantism is revived Christianity.

Chapter 2: Declension of the Early Christian Church

Early Triumphs of the Truth—Causes—The Fourth Century—Early Simplicity lost—The Church remodeled on the Pattern of the Empire—Disputes regarding Easterday—Descent of the Gothic Nations—Introduction of Pagan Rites into the Church—Acceleration of Corruption—Inability of the World all at once to receive the Gospel in its greatness

Picture: The Emperor Constantine the Great

Picture: View of Constantinople

All through, from the fifth to the fifteenth century, the Lamp of Truth burned dimly in the sanctuary of Christendom. Its flame often sank low, and appeared about to expire, yet never did it wholly go out. God remembered His covenant with the light, and set bounds to the darkness. Not only had this heaven-kindled lamp its period of waxing and waning, like those luminaries that God has placed on high, but like them, too, it had its appointed circuit to accomplish. Now it was on the cities of Northern Italy that its light was seen to fall; and now its rays illumined the plains of Southern France. Now it shone along the course of the Danube and the Moldau, or tinted the pale shores of England, or shed its glory upon the Scottish Hebrides. Now it was on the summits of the Alps that it was seen to burn, spreading a gracious morning on the mountain-tops, and giving promise of the sure approach of day. And then, anon, it would bury itself in the deep valleys of Piedmont, and seek shelter from the furious tempests of persecution behind the great rocks and the eternal snows of the everlasting hills. Let us briefly trace the growth of this truth to the days of Wicliffe.

The spread of Christianity during the first three centuries was rapid and extensive. The main causes that contributed to this were the translation of the Scriptures into the languages of the Roman world, the fidelity and zeal of the preachers of the Gospel, and the

heroic deaths of the martyrs. It was the success of Christianity that first set limits to its progress. It had received a terrible blow, it is true, under Diocletian. This, which was the most terrible of all the early persecutions, had, in the belief of the Pagans, utterly exterminated the “Christian superstition” So far from this, it had but afforded the Gospel an opportunity of giving to the world a mightier proof of its divinity. It rose from the stakes and massacres of Diocletian, to begin a new career, in which it was destined to triumph over the empire which thought that it had crushed it. Dignities and wealth now flowed in upon its ministers and disciples, and according to the uniform testimony of all the early historians, the faith which had maintained its purity and rigor in the humble sanctuaries and lowly position of the first age, and amid the fires of its pagan persecutors, became corrupt and waxed feeble amid the gorgeous temples and the worldly dignities which imperial favor had lavished upon it.

From the fourth century the corruptions of the Christian Church continued to make marked and rapid progress. The Bible began to be hidden from the people. And in proportion as the light, which is the surest guarantee of liberty, was withdrawn, the clergy usurped authority over the members of the Church. The canons of councils were put in the room of the one infallible Rule of Faith; and thus the first stone was laid in the foundations of “Babylon, that great city, that made all nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” The ministers of Christ began to affect titles of dignity, and to extend their authority and jurisdiction to temporal matters, forgetful that an office bestowed by God, and serviceable to the highest interests of society, can never fail of respect when filled by men of exemplary character, sincerely devoted to the discharge of its duties.

The beginning of this matter seemed innocent enough. To obviate pleas before the secular tribunals, ministers were frequently asked to arbitrate in disputes between members of the Church, and Constantine made a law confirming all such decisions in the consistories of the clergy, and shutting out the review of their sentences by the civil judges. ¹ Proceeding in this fatal path, the next step was to

¹Eusebius, *De Vita Const.*, lib. 4, cap. 27. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 1, p.162; Dublin. 1723.

form the external polity of the Church upon the model of the civil government. Four vice-kings or prefects governed the Roman Empire under Constantine, and why, it was asked, should not a similar arrangement be introduced into the Church? Accordingly the Christian world was divided into four great dioceses; over each diocese was set a patriarch, who governed the whole clergy of his domain, and thus arose four great thrones or principdoms in the House of God. Where there had been a brotherhood, there was now a hierarchy; and from the lofty chair of the Patriarch, a gradation of rank, and a subordination of authority and office, ran down to the lowly state and contracted sphere of the Presbyter.² It was splendor of rank, rather than the fame of learning and the luster of virtue, that henceforward conferred distinction on the ministers of the Church.

Such an arrangement was not fitted to nourish spirituality of mind, or humility of disposition, or peacefulness of temper. The enmity and violence of the persecutor, the clergy had no longer cause to dread; but the spirit of faction which now took possession of the dignitaries of the Church awakened vehement disputes and fierce contentions, which disparaged the authority and sullied the glory of the sacred office. The emperor himself was witness to these unseemly spectacles. "I entreat you," we find him pathetically saying to the fathers of the Council of Nice, "beloved ministers of God, and servants of our Savior Jesus Christ, take away the cause of our dissension and disagreement, establish peace among yourselves."³

While the, "living oracles" were neglected, the zeal of the clergy began to spend itself upon rites and ceremonies borrowed from the pagans. These were multiplied to such a degree, that Augustine complained that they were "less tolerable than the yoke of the Jews under the law."⁴ At this period the Bishops of Rome wore costly attire, gave sumptuous banquets, and when they went abroad were

²Eusebius, *De Vita Const.*, lib. 4, cap. 24. Mosheim, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 1, cent. 4, p. 94; Glasgow, 1831.

³Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. 3, cap. 12, p. 490; Parisiis, 1659. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 2, p. 14; Lond., 1693.

⁴Baronius admits that many things have been laudably translated from Gentile superstition into the Christian religion (*Annal.*, ad An. 58). And Binnius, extolling the munificence of Constantine towards the Church, speaks of his *superstitionis gentiliae justa aemulatio* ("just emulation of the Gentile superstition"). - *Concil.*, tom. 7, notae in Donat. Constan.

carried in litters. ⁵ They now began to speak with an authoritative voice, and to demand obedience from all the Churches. Of this the dispute between the Eastern and Western Churches respecting Easter is an instance in point. The Eastern Church, following the Jews, kept the feast on the 14th day of the month Nisan ⁶ - the day of the Jewish Passover. The Churches of the West, and especially that of Rome, kept Easter on the Sabbath following the 14th day of Nisan. Victor, Bishop of Rome, resolved to put an end to the controversy, and accordingly, sustaining himself sole judge in this weighty point, he commanded all the churches to observe the feast on the same day with himself. The Churches of the East, not aware that the Bishop of Rome had authority to command their obedience in this or in any other matter, kept Easter as before; and for this flagrant contempt, as Victor accounted it, of his legitimate authority, he excommunicated them. ⁷ They refused to obey a human ordinance, and they were shut out from the kingdom of the Gospel. This was the first peal of those thunders which were in after times to roll so often and so terribly from the Seven Hills.

Riches, flattery, deference, continued to wait upon the Bishop of Rome. The emperor saluted him as Father; foreign Churches sustained him as judge in their disputes; heresiarchs sometimes fled to him for sanctuary; those who had favors to beg extolled his piety, or affected to follow his customs; and it is not surprising that his pride and ambition, fed by continual incense, continued to grow, till at last the presbyter of Rome, from being a vigilant pastor of a single congregation, before whom he went in and out, teaching them from house to house, preaching to them the Word of Life, serving the Lord with all humility in many tears and temptations that befell him,

⁵ Ammian. Marcel., lib. 27, cap. 3. Mosheim, vol. 1, cent. 4, p. 95.

⁶ Nisan corresponds with the latter half of our March and the first half of our April.

⁷ The Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325, enacted that the 21st of March should thenceforward be accounted the vernal equinox, that the Lord's Day following the full moon next after the 21st of March should be kept as Easter Day, but that if the full moon happened on a Sabbath, Easter Day should be the Sabbath following. This is the canon that regulates the observance of Easter in the Church of England. "Easter Day," says the Common Prayer Book, "is always the first Sunday after the full moon which happens upon or next after the 21st day of March; and if the full moon happens upon a Sunday, Easter Day is the Sunday after."

raised his seat above his equals, mounted the throne of the patriarch, and exercised lordship over the heritage of Christ.

The gates of the sanctuary once forced, the stream of corruption continued to flow with ever-deepening volume. The declensions in doctrine and worship already introduced had changed the brightness of the Church's morning into twilight; the descent of the Northern nations, which, beginning in the fifth, continued through several successive centuries, converted that twilight into night. The new tribes had changed their country, but not their superstitions; and, unhappily, there was neither zeal nor vigor in the Christianity of the age to effect their instruction and their genuine conversion. The Bible had been withdrawn; in the pulpit fable had usurped the place of truth; holy lives, whose silent eloquence might have won upon the barbarians, were rarely exemplified; and thus, instead of the Church dissipating the superstitions that now encompassed her like a cloud, these superstitions all but quenched her own light. She opened her gates to receive the new peoples as they were. She sprinkled them with the baptismal water; she inscribed their names in her registers; she taught them in their invocations to repeat the titles of the Trinity; but the doctrines of the Gospel, which alone can enlighten the understanding, purify the heart, and enrich the life with virtue, she was little careful to inculcate upon them. She folded them within her pale, but they were scarcely more Christian than before, while she was greatly less so. From the sixth century down-wards Christianity was a mongrel system, made up of pagan rites revived from classic times, of superstitions imported from the forests of Northern Germany, and of Christian beliefs and observances which continued to linger in the Church from primitive and purer times. The inward power of religion was lost; and it was in vain that men strove to supply its place by the outward form. They nourished their piety not at the living fountains of truth, but with the "beggarly elements" of ceremonies and relics, of consecrated lights and holy vestments. Nor was it Divine knowledge only that was contemned; men forbore to cultivate letters, or practice virtue. Baronius confesses that in the sixth century few in Italy were skilled in both Greek and Latin. Nay, even Gregory the Great acknowledged that he was ignorant of Greek. "The main qualifications of the clergy were, that they should be able to read well, sing their matins, know the Lord's Prayer, psalter, forms

of exorcism, and understand how to compute the times of the sacred festivals. Nor were they very sufficient for this, if we may believe the account some have given of them. Musculus says that many of them never saw the Scriptures in all their lives. It would seem incredible, but it is delivered by no less an authority than Amama, that an Archbishop of Mainz, lighting upon a Bible and looking into it, expressed himself thus: ‘Of a truth I do not know what book this is, but I perceive everything in it is against us.’”⁸

Apostasy is like the descent of heavy bodies, it proceeds with ever-accelerating velocity. First, lamps were lighted at the tombs of the martyrs; next, the Lord’s Supper was celebrated at their graves; next, prayers were offered for them and to them;⁹ next, paintings and images began to disfigure the walls, and corpses to pollute the floors of the churches. Baptism, which apostles required water only to dispense, could not be celebrated without white robes and chrism, milk, honey, and salt.¹⁰ Then came a crowd of church officers whose names and numbers are in striking contrast to the few and simple orders of men who were employed in the first propagation of Christianity. There were sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers, choristers, and porters; and as work must be found for this motley host of laborers, there came to be fasts and exorcisms; there were lamps to be lighted, altars to be arranged, and churches to be consecrated; there was the Eucharist to be carried to the dying; and there were the dead to be buried, for which a special order of men was set apart. When one looked back to the simplicity of early times, it could not but amaze one to think what a cumbrous array of curious machinery and costly furniture was now needed for the service of Christianity. Not more stinging than true was the remark that “when the Church had golden chalices she had wooden priests.”

So far, and through these various stages, had the declension of the Church proceeded. The point she had now reached may be

⁸Bennet’s Memorial of the Reformation, p. 20; Edin., 1748..986

⁹These customs began thus. In times of persecution, assemblies often met in churchyards as the place of greatest safety, and the “elements” were placed on the tombstones. It became usual to pray that the dead might be made partakers in the “first resurrection.” This was grounded on the idea which the primitive Christians entertained respecting the millennium. After Gregory I., prayers for the dead regarded their deliverance from purgatory.

¹⁰Dupin, Eccles. Hist., vol. 1, cent. 3.

termed an epochal one. From the line on which she stood there was no going back; she must advance into the new and unknown regions before her, though every step would carry her farther from the simple form and vigorous life of her early days. She had received a new impregnation from an alien principle, the same, in fact, from which had sprung the great systems that covered the earth before Christianity arose. This principle could not be summarily extirpated; it must run its course, it must develop itself logically; and having, in the course of centuries, brought its fruits to maturity, it would then, but not till then, perish and pass away.

Looking back at this stage to the change which had come over the Church, we cannot fail to see that its deepest originating cause must be sought, in the inability of the world to receive the Gospel in all its greatness. It was a boon too mighty and too free to be easily understood or credited by man. The angels in their midnight song in the vale of Bethlehem had defined it briefly as sublimely, “goodwill to man.” Its greatest preacher, the Apostle Paul, had no other definition to give of it. It was not even a rule of life but “grace,” the “grace of God,” and therefore sovereign, and boundless. To man fallen and undone the Gospel offered a full forgiveness, and a complete spiritual renovation, issuing at length in the inconceivable and infinite felicity of the Life Eternal. But man’s narrow heart could not enlarge itself to God’s vast beneficence. A good so immense, so complete in its nature, and so boundless in its extent, he could not believe that God would bestow without money and without price; there must be conditions or qualifications. So he reasoned. And hence it is that the moment inspired men cease to address us, and that their disciples and scholars take their place - men of apostolic spirit and doctrine, no doubt, but without the direct knowledge of their predecessors - we become sensible of a change; an eclipse has passed upon the exceeding glory of the Gospel. As we pass from Paul to Clement, and from Clement to the Fathers that succeeded him, we find the Gospel becoming less of grace and more of merit. The light wanes as we travel down the Patristic road, and remove ourselves farther from the Apostolic dawn. It continues for some time at least to be the same Gospel, but its glory is shorn, its mighty force is abated; and we are reminded of the change that seems to pass upon the sun, when after contemplating him in a tropical hemisphere,

we see him in a northern sky, where his slanting beams, forcing their way through mists and vapors, are robbed of half their splendor. Seen through the fogs of the Patristic age, the Gospel scarcely looks the same which had burst upon the world without a cloud but a few centuries before.

[7] This disposition - that of making God less free in His gift, and
[8] man less dependent in the reception of it: the desire to introduce the element of merit on the side of man, and the element of condition on the side of God - operated at last in opening the door for the pagan principle to creep back into the Church. A change of a deadly and subtle kind passed upon the worship. Instead of being the spontaneous thanksgiving and joy of the soul, that no more evoked or repaid the blessings which awakened that joy than the odors which the flowers exhale are the cause of their growth, or the joy that kindles in the heart of man when the sun rises is the cause of his rising - worship, we say, from being the expression of the soul's emotions, was changed into a rite, a rite akin to those of the Jewish temples, and still more akin to those of the Greek mythology, a rite in which lay couched a certain amount of human merit and inherent efficacy, that partly created, partly applied the blessings with which it stood connected. This was the moment when the pagan virus inoculated the Christian institution.

This change brought a multitude of others in its train. Worship being transformed into sacrifice - sacrifice in which was the element of expiation and purification - the "teaching ministry" was of course converted into a "sacrificing priesthood." When this had been done, there was no retreating; a boundary had been reached which could not be recrossed till centuries had rolled away, and transformations of a more portentous kind than any which had yet taken place had passed upon the Church.

Chapter 3: Development of the Papacy from the Times of Constantine to those of Hildebrand

Imperial Edicts—Prestige of Rome—Fall of the Western Empire—The Papacy seeks and finds a New Basis of Power—Christ’s Vicar—Conversion of Gothic Nations—Pepin and Charlemagne—The Lombards and the Saracens—Forgeries and False Decretals—Election of the Roman Pontiff

Picture: Visit of Charlemagne to the Pope

Picture: Penance of Henry IV. of Germany at Canossa

Before opening our great theme it may be needful to sketch the rise and development of the Papacy as a politico-ecclesiastical power. The history on which we are entering, and which we must rapidly traverse, is one of the most wonderful in the world. It is scarcely possible to imagine humbler beginnings than those from which the Papacy arose, and certainly it is not possible to imagine a loftier height than that to which it eventually climbed. He who was seen in the first century presiding as the humble pastor over a single congregation, and claiming no rank above his brethren, is beheld in the twelfth century occupying a seat from which he looks down on all the thrones temporal and spiritual of Christendom. How, we ask with amazement, was the Papacy able to traverse the mighty space that divided the humble pastor from the mitred king?

We traced in the foregoing chapter the decay of doctrine and manners within the Church. Among the causes which contributed to the exaltation of the Papacy this declension may be ranked as fundamental, seeing it opened the door for other deteriorating influences, and mightily favored their operation. Instead of “reaching forth to what was before,” the Christian Church permitted herself to be overtaken by the spirit of the ages that lay behind her. There came an after-growth of Jewish ritualism, of Greek philosophy, and of Pagan ceremonialism and idolatry; and, as the consequence of this threefold action, the clergy began to be gradually changed, as

already mentioned, from a “teaching ministry” to a “sacrificing priesthood.” This made them no longer ministers or servants of their fellow-Christians; they took the position of a caste, claiming to be superior to the laity, invested with mysterious powers, the channels of grace, and the mediators with God. Thus there arose a hierarchy, assuming to mediate between God and men.

The hierarchical polity was the natural concomitant of the hierarchical doctrine. That polity was so consolidated by the time that the empire became Christian, and Constantine ascended the throne (311), that the Church now stood out as a body distinct from the State; and her new organization, subsequently received, in imitation of that of the empire, as stated in the previous chapter, helped still further to define and strengthen her hierarchical government. Still, the primacy of Rome was then a thing unheard of. Manifestly the 300 Fathers who assembled (A.D. 325) at Nicaea knew nothing of [9] it, for in their sixth and seventh canons they expressly recognize the authority of the Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and others, each within its own boundaries, even as Rome had jurisdiction within its limits; and enact that the jurisdiction and privileges of these Churches shall be retained. ¹ Under Leo the Great (440 - 461) a forward step was taken. The Church of Rome assumed the form and exercised the sway of an ecclesiastical principality, while her head, in virtue of an imperial manifesto (445) of Valentinian III., which recognized the Bishop of Rome as supreme over the Western Church, affected the authority and pomp of a spiritual sovereign.

Still further, the ascent of the Bishop of Rome to the supremacy was silently yet powerfully aided by that mysterious and subtle influence which appeared to be indigenous to the soil on which his chair was placed. In an age when the rank of the city determined the rank of its pastor, it was natural that the Bishop of Rome should hold something of that pre-eminence among the clergy which Rome held among cities. Gradually the reverence and awe with which men had regarded the old mistress of the world, began to gather round the person and the chair of her bishop. It was an age of factions and strifes, and the eyes of the contending parties naturally

¹Hardouin, *Acta Concil.*, tom. 1, col 325; Parisiis, 1715. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 1, p. 600; Dublin edition.

turned to the pastor of the Tiber. They craved his advice, or they submitted their differences to his judgment. These applications the Roman Bishop was careful to register as acknowledgments of his superiority, and on fitting occasions he was not forgetful to make them the basis of new and higher claims. The Latin race, moreover, retained the practical habits for which it had so long been renowned; and while the Easterns, giving way to their speculative genius, were expending their energies in controversy, the Western Church was steadily pursuing her onward path, and skillfully availing herself of everything that could tend to enhance her influence and extend her jurisdiction.

The removal of the seat of empire from Rome to the splendid city on the Bosphorus, Constantinople, which the emperor had built with becoming magnificence for his residence, also tended to enhance the power of the Papal chair. It removed from the side of the Pope a functionary by whom he was eclipsed, and left him the first person in the old capital of the world. The emperor had departed, but the prestige of the old city - the fruit of countless victories, and of ages of dominion - had not departed. The contest which had been going on for some time among the five great patriarchates - Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Rome - the question at issue being the same as that which provoked the contention among the disciples of old, "which was the greatest," was now restricted to the last two. The city on the Bosphorus was the seat of government, and the abode of the emperor; this gave her patriarch powerful claims. But the city on the banks of the Tiber wielded a mysterious and potent charm over the imagination, as the heir of her who had been the possessor of all the power, of all the glory, and of all the dominion of the past; and this vast prestige enabled her patriarch to carry the day. As Rome was the one city in the earth, so her bishop was the one bishop in the Church. A century and a half later (606), this pre-eminence was decreed to the Roman Bishop in an imperial edict of Phocas.

Thus, before the Empire of the West fell, the Bishop of Rome had established substantially his spiritual supremacy. An influence of a manifold kind, of which not the least part was the prestige of the city and the empire, had lifted him to this fatal pre-eminence. But now the time has come when the empire must fall, and we expect

to see that supremacy which it had so largely helped to build up fall with it. But no! The wave of barbarism which rolled in from the North, overwhelming society and sweeping away the empire, broke harmlessly at the feet of the Bishop of Rome. The shocks that overturned dynasties and blotted out nationalities, left his power untouched, his seat unshaken. Nay, it was at that very hour, when society was perishing around him, that the Bishop of Rome laid anew the foundations of his power, and placed them where they might remain immovable for all time. He now cast himself on a far stronger element than any the revolution had swept away. He now claimed to be the successor of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and the Vicar of Christ.

[10] The canons of Councils, as recorded in Hardouin, show a stream of decisions from Pope Celestine, in the middle of the fifth century, to Pope Boniface II. in the middle of the sixth, claiming, directly or indirectly, this august prerogative.² When the Bishop of Rome placed his chair, with all the prerogatives and dignities vested in it, upon this ground, he stood no longer upon a merely imperial foundation. Henceforward he held neither of Caesar nor of Rome; he held immediately of Heaven. What one emperor had given, another emperor might take away. It did not suit the Pope to hold his office by so uncertain a tenure. He made haste, therefore, to place his supremacy where no future decree of emperor, no lapse of years, and no coming revolution could overturn it. He claimed to rest it upon a Divine foundation; he claimed to be not merely the chief of bishops and the first of patriarchs, but the vicar of the Most High God.

With the assertion of this dogma the system of the Papacy was completed essentially and doctrinally, but not as yet practically. It had to wait the full development of the idea of vicarship, which was not till the days of Gregory VII. But here have we the embryotic seed - the vicarship, namely - out of which the vast structure of the Papacy has sprung. This it is that plants at the center of the system a pseudo-divine jurisdiction, and places the Pope above all bishops with their flocks, above all king with their subjects. This it is that gives the Pope two swords. This it is that gives him three crowns.

²Hard. 1. 1477; 2. 787,886. Baron. 6. 235.

The day when this dogma was proclaimed was the true birthday of the Popedom. The Bishop of Rome had till now sat in the seat of Caesar; henceforward he was to sit in the seat of God.

From this time the growth of the Popedom was rapid indeed. The state of society favored its development. Night had descended upon the world from the North; and in the universal barbarism, the more prodigious any pretensions were, the more likely were they to find both belief and submission. The Goths, on arriving in their new settlements, beheld a religion which was served by magnificent cathedrals, imposing rites, and wealthy and powerful prelates, presided over by a chief priest, in whose reputed sanctity and ghostly authority they found again their own chief Druid. These rude warriors, who had overturned the throne of the Caesars, bowed down before the chair of the Popes. The evangelization of these tribes was a task of easy accomplishment. The "Catholic faith," which they began to exchange for their Paganism or Arianism, consisted chiefly in their being able to recite the names of the objects of their worship, which they were left to adore with much the same rites as they had practiced in their native forests. They did not much concern themselves with the study of Christian doctrine, or the practice of Christian virtue. The age furnished but few manuals of the one, and still fewer models of the other.

The first of the Gothic princes to enter the Roman communion was Clovis, King of the Franks. In fulfillment of a vow which he had made on the field of Tolbiac, where he vanquished the Allemanni, Clovis was baptized in the Cathedral of Rheims (496), with every circumstance of solemnity which could impress a sense of the awfulness of the rite on the minds of its rude proselytes. Three thousand of his warlike subjects were baptized along with him.³ The Pope styled him "the eldest son of the Church," a title which was regularly adopted by all the subsequent Kings of France. When Clovis ascended from the baptismal font he was the only as well as the eldest son of the Church, for he alone, of all the new chiefs that now governed the West, had as yet submitted to the baptismal rite.

The threshold once crossed, others were not slow to follow. In the next century, the sixth, the Burgundians of Southern Gaul, the

³Muller, Univ. History, vol. 2, p. 21; Lond., 1818.

Visigoths of Spain, the Suevi of Portugal, and the Anglo-Saxons of Britain entered the pale of Rome. In the seventh century the disposition was still growing among the princes of Western Europe to submit themselves and refer their disputes to the Pontiff as their spiritual father. National assemblies were held twice a year, under the sanction of the bishops. The prelates made use of these gatherings to procure enactments favorable to the propagation of the faith as held by Rome. These assemblies were first encouraged, then enjoined by the Pope, who came in this way to be regarded as a sort of Father or protector of the states of the West. Accordingly we find Sigismund, King of Burgundy, ordering (554) that all assembly should be held for the future on the 6th of September every year, "at which time the ecclesiastics are not so much engrossed with the worldly cares of husbandry."⁴ The ecclesiastical conquest of Germany was in this century completed, and thus the spiritual dominions of the Pope were still farther extended.

[11] In the eighth century there came a moment of supreme peril to Rome. At almost one and the same time she was menaced by two dangers, which threatened to sweep her out of existence, but which, in their issue, contributed to strengthen her dominion. On the west the victorious Saracens, having crossed the Pyrenees and overrun the south of France, were watering their steeds at the Loire, and threatening to descend upon Italy and plant the Crescent in the room of the Cross. On the north, the Lombards - who, under Alboin, had established themselves in Central Italy two centuries before - had burst the barrier of the Apennines, and were brandishing their swords at the gates of Rome. They were on the point of replacing Catholic orthodoxy with the creed of Arianism. Having taken advantage of the iconoclast disputes to throw off the imperial yoke, the Pope could expect no aid from the Emperor of Constantinople. He turned his eyes to France. The prompt and powerful interposition of the Frankish arms saved the Papal chair, now in extreme jeopardy. The intrepid Charles Martel drove back the Saracens (732), and Pepin, the mayor of the palace, son of Charles Martel, who had just seized the throne, and needed the Papal sanction to color his usurpation, with equal promptitude hastened to the Pope's help (Stephen II.)

⁴Muller, vol. 2, p. 23.

against the Lombards (754). Having vanquished them, he placed the keys of their towns upon the altar of St. Peter, and so laid the first foundation of the Pope's temporal sovereignty. The yet more illustrious son of Pepin, Charlemagne, had to repeat this service in the Pope's behalf. The Lombards becoming again troublesome, Charlemagne subdued them a second time. After his campaign he visited Rome (774). The youth of the city, bearing olive and palm branches, met him at the gates, the Pope and the clergy received him in the vestibule of St. Peter's, and entering "into the sepulcher where the bones of the apostles lie," he finally ceded to the pontiff the territories of the conquered tribes.⁵ It was in this way that Peter obtained his "patrimony," the Church her dowry, and the Pope his triple crown.

The Pope had now attained two of the three grades of power that constitute his stupendous dignity. He had made himself a bishop of bishops, head of the Church, and he had become a crowned monarch. Did this content him? No! He said, "I will ascend the sides of the mount; I will plant my throne above the stars; I will be as God." Not content with being a bishop of bishops, and so governing the whole spiritual affairs of Christendom, he aimed at becoming a king of kings, and so of governing the whole temporal affairs of the world. He aspired to supremacy, sole, absolute, and unlimited. This alone was wanting to complete that colossal fabric of power, the Popedom, and towards this the pontiff now began to strive.

Some of the arts had recourse to in order to grasp the coveted dignity were of an extraordinary kind. An astounding document, purporting to have been written in the fourth century, although unheard of till now, was in the year 776 brought out of the darkness in which it had been so long suffered to remain. It was the "Donation" or Testament of the Emperor Constantine. Constantine, says the legend, found Sylvester in one of the monasteries on Mount Soracte, and having mounted him on a mule, he took hold of his bridle rein, and walking all the way on foot, the emperor conducted Sylvester to Rome, and placed him upon the Papal throne. But this was as nothing compared with the vast and splendid inheritance which Constantine

⁵Muller, vol. 2, p. 74.

conferred on him, as the following quotation from the deed of gift to which we have referred will show: -

“We attribute to the See of Peter all the dignity, all the glory, all the authority of the imperial power. Furthermore, we give to Sylvester and to his successors our palace of the Lateran, which is incontestably the finest palace on the earth; we give him our crown, our miter, our diadem, and all our imperial vestments; we transfer to him the imperial dignity. We bestow on the holy Pontiff in free gift the city of Rome, and all the western cities of Italy. To cede precedence to him, we divest ourselves of our authority over all those provinces, and we withdraw from Rome, transferring the seat of our empire to Byzantium; inasmuch as it is not proper that an earthly emperor should preserve the least authority, where God hath established the head of his religion.”⁶

A rare piece of modesty this on the part of the Popes, to keep this invaluable document beside them for 400 years, and never say a word about it; and equally admirable the policy of selecting the darkness of the eighth century as the fittest time for its publication. To quote it is to refute it. It was probably forged a little before A.D. 754. It was composed to repel the Longobards on the one side, and the Greeks on the other, and to influence the mind of Pepin. In it, Constantine is made to speak in the Latin of the eighth century, and to address Bishop Sylvester as Prince of the Apostles, Vicar of Christ, and as having authority over the four great thrones, not yet set up, of Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Constantinople. It was probably written by a priest of the Lateran Church, and it gained its object - that is, it led Pepin to bestow on the Pope the Exarchate of Ravenna, with twenty towns to furnish oil for the lamps in the Roman churches.

During more than 600 years Rome impressively cited this deed of gift, inserted it in her codes, permitted none to question its genuineness, and burned those who refused to believe in it. The first dawn of light in the sixteenth century sufficed to discover the cheat.

⁶We quote from the copy of the document in Pope Leo's letter in Hardouin's Collection. Epistola I., Leonis Papoe IX.; Acta Conciliorum et Epistoloe Decretales, tom. 6, pp. 934, 936; Parisiis, 1714. The English reader will find a copy of the pretended original document in full in Historical Essay on the Power of the Popes, vol. 2, Appendix, tr. from French; London, 1838.

In the following century another document of a like extraordinary character was given to the world. We refer to the “Decretals of Isidore.” These were concocted about the year 845. They professed to be a collection of the letters, rescripts, and bulls of the early pastors of the Church of Rome - Anacletus, Clement, and others, down to Sylvester - the very men to whom the terms “rescript” and “bull” were unknown. The burden of this compilation was the pontifical supremacy, which it affirmed had existed from the first age. It was the clumsiest, but the most successful, of all the forgeries which have emanated from what the Greeks have reproachfully termed “the native home of inventions and falsifications of documents.” The writer, who professed to be living in the first century, painted the Church of Rome in the magnificence which she attained only in the ninth; and made the pastors of the first age speak in the pompous words of the Popes of the Middle Ages. Abounding in absurdities, contradictions, and anachronisms, it affords a measure of the intelligence of the age that accepted it as authentic. It was eagerly laid hold of by Nicholas I. to prop up and extend the fabric of his power. His successors made it the arsenal from which they drew their weapons of attack against both bishops and kings. It became the foundation of the canon law, and continues to be so, although there is not now a Popish writer who does not acknowledge it to be a piece of imposture. “Never,” says Father de Rignon, “was there seen a forgery so audacious, so extensive, so solemn, so persevering.”⁷ Yet the discovery of the fraud has not shaken the system. The learned Dupin supposes that these decretals were fabricated by Benedict, a deacon of Mainz, who was the first to publish them, and that, to give them greater currency, he prefixed to them the name of Isidore, a bishop who flourished in Seville in the seventh century. “Without the pseudo-Isidore,” says Janus, “there could have been no Gregory VII. The Isidorian forgeries were the broad foundation which the Gregorians built upon.”⁸

All the while the Papacy was working on another line for the emancipation of its chief from interference and control, whether on the side of the people or on the side of the kings. In early times the

⁷Etudes Religieuses, November, 1866.

⁸The Pope and the Council, by “Janus,” p. 105; London, 1869.

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bishops were elected by the people.⁹ By-and-by they came to be elected by the clergy, with consent of the people; but gradually the people were excluded from all share in the matter, first in the Eastern Church, and then in the Western, although traces of popular election are found at Milan so late as the eleventh century. The election of the Bishop of Rome in early times was in no way different from that of other bishops - that is, he was chosen by the people. Next, the consent of the emperor came to be necessary to the validity of the popular choice. Then, the emperor alone elected the Pope. Next, the cardinals claimed a voice in the matter; they elected and presented the object of their choice to the emperor for confirmation. Last of all, the cardinals took the business entirely into their own hands. Thus gradually was the way paved for the full emancipation and absolute supremacy of the Popedom.

⁹The above statement regarding the mode of electing bishops during the first three centuries rests on the authority of Clement, Bishop of Rome, in the first century; Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, in the third century; and of Gregory Nazianzen. See also De Dominis, *De Repub. Eccles.*; Blondel, *Apologia*; Dean Waddington; Barrow, *Supremacy*; and Mosheim, *Eccl. Hist.*, cent. 1.

Chapter 4: Development of the Papacy from Gregory VII. to Boniface VIII.

The Wax of Investitures—Gregory VII. and Henry IV—The Miter Triumphs over the Empire—Noon of the Papacy under Innocent III—Continued to Boniface VIII—First and Last Estate of the Roman Pastors Contrasted—Seven Centuries of Continuous Success—Interpreted by Some as a Proof that the Papacy is Divine—Reasons explaining this Marvelous Success—Eclipsed by the Gospel’s Progress

Picture: View in Milan

We come now to the last great struggle. There lacked one grade of power to complete and crown this stupendous fabric of dominion. The spiritual supremacy was achieved in the seventh century, the temporal sovereignty was attained in the eighth; it wanted only the pontifical supremacy - sometimes, although improperly, styled the temporal supremacy to make the Pope supreme over kings, as he had already become over peoples and bishops, and to vest in him a jurisdiction that has not its like on earth - a jurisdiction that is unique, inasmuch as it arrogates all powers, absorbs all rights, and spurns all limits. Destined, before terminating its career, to crush beneath its iron foot thrones and nations, and masking an ambition as astute as Lucifer’s with a dissimulation as profound, this power advanced at first with noiseless steps, and stole upon the world as night steals upon it; but as it neared the goal its strides grew longer and swifter, till at last it vaulted over the throne of monarchs into the seat of God.

This great war we shall now proceed to consider. When the Popes, at an early stage, claimed to be the vicars of Christ, they virtually challenged that boundless jurisdiction of which their proudest era beheld them in actual possession. But they knew that it would be imprudent, indeed impossible, as yet to assert it in actual fact. Their motto was *Spes messis in semine*. Discerning “the harvest

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in the seed,” they were content meanwhile to lodge the principle of supremacy in their creed, and in the general mind of Europe, knowing that future ages would fructify and ripen it. Towards this they began to work quietly, yet skillfully and perseveringly. At length came overt and open measures. It was now the year 1073. The Papal chair was filled by perhaps the greatest of all the Popes, Gregory VII., the noted Hildebrand. Daring and ambitious beyond all who had preceded, and beyond most of those who have followed him on the Papal throne, Gregory fully grasped the great idea of Theocracy. He held that the reign of the pope was but another name for the reign of God, and he resolved never to rest till that idea had been realized in the subjection of all authority and power, spiritual and temporal, to the chair of Peter. “When he drew out,” says Janus, “the whole system of Papal omnipotence in twenty-seven theses in his ‘Dictatus,’ these theses were partly mere repetitions or corollaries of the Isidorian decretals; partly he and his friends sought to give them the appearance of tradition and antiquity by new fictions.”¹ We may take the following as samples. The eleventh maxim says, “the Pope’s name is the chief name in the world;” the twelfth teaches that “it is lawful for him to depose emperors;” the eighteenth affirms that “his decision is to be withstood by none, but he alone may annul those of all men.” The nineteenth declares that “he can be judged by no one.” The twenty-fifth vests in him the absolute power of deposing and restoring bishops, and the twenty-seventh the power of annulling the allegiance of subjects.² Such was the gage that Gregory flung down to the kings and nations of the world - we say of the world, for the pontifical supremacy embraces all who dwell upon the earth.

Now began the war between the miter and the empire; Gregory’s object in this war being to wrest from the emperors the power of appointing the bishops and the clergy generally, and to assume into his own sole and irresponsible hands the whole of that intellectual and spiritual machinery by which Christendom was governed. The strife was a bloody one. The miter, though sustaining occasional reverses, continued nevertheless to gain steadily upon the empire. The spirit of the times helped the priesthood in their struggle with the

¹The Pope and the Council, p. 107.

²Binnius, *Concilia*, vol. 3, pars. 2, p. 297; Col. Agrip., 1618..987

civil power. The age was superstitious to the core, and though in no wise spiritual, it was very thoroughly ecclesiastical. The crusades, too, broke the spirit and drained the wealth of the princes, while the growing power and augmenting riches of the clergy cast the balance ever more and more against the State.

For a brief space Gregory VII. tasted in his own case the luxury of wielding this more than mortal power. There came a gleam through the awful darkness of the tempest he had raised - not final victory, which was yet a century distant, but its presage. He had the satisfaction of seeing the emperor, Henry IV. of Germany - whom he had smitten with excommunication - barefooted, and in raiment of sackcloth, waiting three days and nights at the castle-gates of Canossa, amid the winter drifts, suing for forgiveness. But it was for a moment only that Hildebrand stood on this dazzling pinnacle. The fortune of war very quickly turned. Henry, the man whom the Pope had so sorely humiliated, became victor in his turn. Gregory died, an exile, on the promontory of Salerno; but his successors espoused his project, and strove by wiles, by arms, and by anathemas, to reduce the world under the scepter of the Papal Theocracy. For well-nigh two dismal centuries the conflict was maintained. How truly melancholy the record of these times! It exhibits to our sorrowing gaze many a stricken field, many an empty throne, many a city sacked, many a spot deluged with blood!

But through all this confusion and misery the idea of Gregory was perseveringly pursued, till at last it was realized, and the miter was beheld triumphant over the empire. It was the fortune or the calamity of Innocent III. (1198-1216) to celebrate this great victory. Now it was that the pontifical supremacy reached its full development. One man, one will again governed the world. It is with a sort of stupefied awe that we look back to the thirteenth century, and see in the foreground of the receding storm this Colossus, uprearing itself in the person of Innocent III., on its head all the miters of the Church, and in its hand all the scepters of the State.

“In each of the three leading objects which Rome has pursued,” says Hallam - “independent sovereignty, supremacy over the Christian Church, control over the princes of the earth it was the fortune

[16] of this pontiff to conquer.”³ “Rome,” he says again, “inspired during this age all the terror of her ancient name; she was once more mistress of the world, and kings were her vassals.”⁴ She had fought a great fight, and now she celebrated an unequalled triumph. Innocent appointed all bishops; he summoned to his tribunal all causes, from the gravest affairs of mighty kingdoms to the private concerns of the humble citizen. He claimed all kingdoms as his fiefs, all monarchs as his vassals; and launched with unsparing hand the bolts of excommunication against all who withstood his pontifical will. Hildebrand’s idea was now fully realized. The pontifical supremacy was beheld in its plenitude - the plenitude of spiritual power, and that of temporal power. It was the noon of the Papacy; but the noon of the Papacy was the midnight of the world.

The grandeur which the Papacy now enjoyed, and the jurisdiction it wielded, have received dogmatic expression, and one or two selections will enable it to paint itself as it was seen in its noon. Pope Innocent III. affirmed “that the pontifical authority so much exceeded the royal power as the sun doth the moon.”⁵ Nor could he find words fitly to describe his own formidable functions, save those of Jehovah to his prophet Jeremiah: “See, I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down.” “The Church my spouse,” we find the same Pope saying, “is not married to me without bringing me something. She hath given me a dowry of a price beyond all price, the plenitude of spiritual things, and the extent of things temporal;⁶ the greatness and abundance of both. She hath given me the miter in token of things spiritual, the crown in token of the temporal; the miter for the priesthood, and the crown for the kingdom; making me the lieutenant of him who hath written upon his vesture, and on his thigh, ‘the King of kings and the Lord of lords.’ I enjoy alone the plenitude of power, that others may say of me, next to God, ‘and out of his fullness have we received.’”⁷ “We declare,” says Boniface VIII. (1294-1303), in his bull *Unam Sanctam*, “define, pronounce it

³Hallam, 2. 276.

⁴Hallam, 2. 284.

⁵P. Innocent III. in *Decret. Greg.*, lib. 1, tit. 33.

⁶“*Spiritualium plenitudinem, et latitudinem temporalium.*”

⁷*Itinerar. Ital.*, part 2, *De Coron. Rom. Pont.*

to be necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.” This subjection is declared in the bull to extend to all affairs. “One sword,” says the Pope, “must be under another, and the temporal authority must be subject to the spiritual power; whence, if the earthly power go astray, it must be judged by the spiritual.”⁸ Such are a few of the “great words” which were heard to issue from the Vatican Mount, that new Sinai, which, like the old, encompassed by fiery terrors, had upreared itself in the midst of the astonished and affrighted nations of Christendom.

What a contrast between the first and the last estate of the pastors of the Roman Church! - between the humility and poverty of the first century, and the splendor and power in which the thirteenth saw them enthroned! This contrast has not escaped the notice of the greatest of Italian poets. Dante, in one of his lightning flashes, has brought it before us. He describes the first pastors of the Church as coming

- “barefoot and lean, Eating their bread, as chanced, at the first table.”

And addressing Peter, he says: -

“E’en thou went’st forth in poverty and hunger To set the goodly plant that, from the Vine it once was, now is grown unsightly bramble.”⁹

Petrarch dwells repeatedly and with more amplification on the same theme. We quote only the first and last stanzas of his sonnet on the Church of Rome: -

“The fire of wrathful heaven alight, And all thy harlot tresses smite, Base city! Thou from humble fare, Thy acorns and thy water, rose To greatness, rich with others’ woes, Rejoicing in the ruin thou didst bear.” “In former days thou wast not laid On down, nor under cooling shade; Thou naked to the winds wast given, And through the sharp and thorny road Thy feet without the sandals trod; But now thy life is such it smells to heaven.”¹⁰

There is something here out of the ordinary course. We have no desire to detract from the worldly wisdom of the Popes; they

⁸“Oportet gladium esse sub gladio, et temporalem auctoritatem spirituali subijci potestati. Ergo, si deviat terrena potestas judicabitur a potestate spirituali.” (Corp. Jur. Can. a Pithoeo, tom. 2, Extrav., lib. 1, tit. 8, cap. 1; Paris, 1671.)

⁹Paradiso, canto 24.

¹⁰Le Rime del Petrarca, tome 1, p. 325. ed. Lod. Castel.

were, in that respect, the ablest race of rulers the world ever saw. Their enterprise soared as high above the vastest scheme of other potentates and conquerors, as their ostensible means of achieving it fell below theirs. To build such a fabric of dominion upon the Gospel, every line of which repudiates and condemns it! to impose it upon the world without an army and without a fleet! to bow the necks not of ignorant peoples only, but of mighty potentates to it! nay, to persuade the latter to assist in establishing a power which they could hardly but foresee would clash themselves! to pursue this scheme through a succession of centuries without once meeting any serious check or repulse - for of the 130 Popes between Boniface III. (606), who, in partnership with Phocas, laid the foundations of the Papal grandeur, and Gregory VII., who tint realized it, onward through other two centuries to Innocent III. (1216) and Boniface VIII. (1303), who at last put the top-stone upon it, not one lost an inch of ground which his predecessor had gained! - to do all this is, we repeat, something out of the ordinary course. There is nothing like it again in the whole history of the world.

This success, continued through seven centuries, was audaciously interpreted into a proof of the divinity of the Papacy. Behold, it has been said, when the throne of Caesar was overturned, how the chair of Peter stood erect! Behold, when the barbarous nations rushed like a torrent into Italy, overwhelming laws, extinguishing knowledge, and dissolving society itself, how the ark of the Church rode in safety on the flood! Behold, when the victorious hosts of the Saracen approached the gates of Italy, how they were turned back! Behold, when the miter waged its great contest with the empire, how it triumphed! Behold, when the Reformation broke out, and it seemed as if the kingdom of the Pope was numbered and finished, how three centuries have been added to its sway! Behold, in fine, when revolution broke out in France, and swept like a whirlwind over Europe, bearing down thrones and dynasties, how the bark of Peter outlived the storm, and rode triumphant above the waves that engulfed apparently stronger structures! Is not this the Church of which Christ said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it?"

What else do the words of Cardinal Baronius mean? Boasting of a supposed donation of the kingdom of Hungary to the Roman See by Stephen, he says, "It fell out by a wonderful providence of God,

that at the very time when the Roman Church might appear ready to fall and perish, even then distant kings approach the Apostolic See, which they acknowledge and venerate as the only temple of the universe, the sanctuary of piety, the pillar of truth, the immovable rock. Behold, kings - not from the East, as of old they came to the cradle of Christ, but from the North - led by faith, they humbly approach the cottage of the fisher, the Church of Rome herself, offering not only gifts out of their treasures, but bringing even kingdoms to her, and asking kingdoms from her. Whoso is wise, and will record these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.”¹¹

But the success of the Papacy, when closely examined, is not so surprising as it looks. It cannot be justly pronounced legitimate, or fairly won. Rome has ever been swimming with the tide. The evils and passions of society, which a true benefactress would have made it her business to cure - at least, to alleviate - Rome has studied rather to foster into strength, that she might be borne to power on the foul current which she herself had created. Amid battles, bloodshed, and confusion, has her path lain. The edicts of subservient Councils, the forgeries of hireling priests, the arms of craven monarchs, and the thunderbolts of excommunication have never been wanting to open her path. Exploits won by weapons of this sort are what her historians delight to chronicle. These are the victories that constitute her glory! And then, there remains yet another and great deduction from the apparent grandeur of her success, in that, after all, it is the success of only a few - a caste - the clergy. For although, during herearly career, the Roman Church rendered certain important services to society - of which it will delight us to make mention in fitting place when she grew to maturity, and was able to develop her real genius, it was felt and acknowledged by all that her principles implied the ruin of all interests save her own, and that there was room in the world for none but herself. If her march, as shown in history down to the sixteenth century, is ever onwards, it is not less true that behind, on her path, lie the wrecks of nations, and the ashes of literature, of liberty, and of civilization.

Nor can we help observing that the career of Rome, with all the fictitious brilliance that encompasses it, is utterly eclipsed when

¹¹Baronius, *Annal.*, ann. 1000, tom. 10, col. 963; Col. Agrip., 1609.

placed beside the silent and sublime progress of the Gospel. The latter we see winning its way over mighty obstacles solely by the force and sweetness of its own truth. It touches the deep wounds of society only to heal them. It speaks not to awaken but to hush the rough voice of strife and war. It enlightens, purifies, and blesses men wherever it comes, and it does all this so gently and unboastingly! Reviled, it reviles not again. For curses it returns blessings. It [18] unsheathes no sword; it spills no blood. Cast into chains, its victories are as many as when free, and more glorious; dragged to the stake and burned, from the ashes of the martyr there start up a thousand confessors, to speed on its career and swell the glory of its triumph. Compared with this how different has been the career of Rome! - as different, in fact, as the thunder-cloud which comes onward, mantling the skies in gloom and scathing the earth with fiery bolts, is different from the morning descending from the mountain-tops, scattering around it the silvery light, and awakening at its presence songs of joy.

Chapter 5: Mediaeval Protestant Witnesses

Ambrose of Milan—His Diocese—His Theology—Rufinus, Presbyter of Aquileia—Laurentius of Milan—The Bishops of the Grisons—Churches of Lombardy in Seventh and Eighth Centuries—Claude in the Ninth Century—His Labours—Outline of his Theology—His Doctrine of the Eucharist—His Battle against Images—His Views on the Roman Primacy—Proof thence arising—Councils in France approve his Views—Question of the Services of the Roman Church to the Western Nations

Picture: View of Turin

The apostasy was not universal. At no time did God leave His ancient Gospel without witnesses. When one body of confessors yielded to the darkness, or was cut off by violence, another arose in some other land, so that there was no age in which, in some country or other of Christendom, public testimony was not borne against the errors of Rome, and in behalf of the Gospel which she sought to destroy.

The country in which we find the earliest of these Protesters is Italy. The See of Rome, in those days, embraced only the capital and the surrounding provinces. The diocese of Milan, which included the plain of Lombardy, the Alps of Piedmont, and the southern provinces of France, greatly exceeded it in extent. ¹ It is an undoubted historical fact that this powerful diocese was not then tributary to the Papal chair. “The Bishops of Milan,” says Pope Pelagius I. (555), “do not come to Rome for ordination.” He further informs us that this “was an ancient custom of theirs.” ² Pope Pelagius, however, attempted to subvert this “ancient custom,” but his efforts resulted only in a wider estrangement between the two dioceses of Milan and Rome. For

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¹Allix, *Ancient Churches of Piedmont*, chap. 1; Lond., 1690. M’Crie, *Italy*, p. 1; Edin., 1833.

²“Is mos antiquus fuit.” (Labbei et Gab. Cossartii Concil., tom. 6, col. 482; Venetiis, 1729.)

when Platina speaks of the subjection of Milan to the Pope under Stephen IX.,³ in the middle of the eleventh century, he admits that “for 200 years together the Church of Milan had been separated from the Church of Rome.” Even then, though on the very eve of the Hildebrandine era, the destruction of the independence of the diocese was not accomplished without a protest on the part of its clergy, and a tumult on the part of the people. The former affirmed that “the Ambrosian Church was not subject to the laws of Rome; that it had been always free, and could not, with honour, surrender its liberties.” The latter broke out into clamor, and threatened violence to Damianus, the deputy sent to receive their submission. “The people grew into higher ferment,” says Baronius;⁴ “the bells were rung; the episcopal palace beset; and the legate threatened with death.” Traces of its early independence remain to this day in the [20] Rito or Culto Ambrogiano, still in use throughout the whole of the ancient Archbishopric of Milan.

One consequence of this ecclesiastical independence of Northern Italy was, that the corruptions of which Rome was the source were late in being introduced into Milan and its diocese. The evangelical light shone there some centuries after the darkness had gathered in the southern part of the peninsula. Ambrose, who died A.D. 397, was Bishop of Milan for twenty-three years. His theology, and that of his diocese, was in no essential respects different from that which Protestants hold at this day. The Bible alone was his rule of faith; Christ alone was the foundation of the Church; the justification of the sinner and the remission of sins were not of human merit, but by the expiatory sacrifice of the Cross; there were but two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and in the latter Christ was held to be present only figuratively.⁵ Such is a summary of the faith

³A mistake of the historian. It was under Nicholas II. (1059) that the independence of Milan was extinguished. Platina’s words are: - “Che [chiesa di Milano] era forse ducento anni stata dalla chiesa di Roma separata.” (*Historia delle Vite dei Sommi Pontefici*, p. 128; Venetia, 1600.)

⁴Baronius, *Annal.*, ann. 1059, tom. 11, col. 277; Col. Agrip., 1609.

⁵Allix, *Churches of Piedmont*, chap. 3.

professed and taught by the chief bishop of the north of Italy in the end of the fourth century. ⁶

Rufinus, of Aquileia, first metropolitan in the diocese of Milan, taught substantially the same doctrine in the fifth century. His treatise on the Creed no more agrees with the catechism of the Council of Trent than does the catechism of Protestants. ⁷ His successors at Aquileia, so far as can be gathered from the writings which they have left behind them, shared the sentiments of Rufinus.

To come to the sixth century, we find Laurentius, Bishop of Milan, holding that the penitence of the heart, without the absolution of a priest, suffices for pardon; and in the end of the same century (A.D. 590) we find the bishops of Italy and of the Grisons, to the number of nine, rejecting the communion of the Pope, as a heretic, so little then was the infallibility believed in, or the Roman supremacy acknowledged. ⁸ In the seventh century we find Mansuetus, Bishop of Milan, declaring that the whole faith of the Church is contained in the Apostles' Creed; from which it is evident that he did not regard as necessary to salvation the additions which Rome had then begun to make, and the many she has since appended to the apostolic doctrine. The Ambrosian Liturgy, which, as we have said, continues to be used in the diocese of Milan, is a monument to the comparative purity of the faith and worship of the early Churches of Lombardy.

In the eighth century we find Paulinus, Bishop of Aquileia, declaring that "we feed upon the divine nature of Jesus Christ, which cannot be said but only with respect to believers, and must be understood metaphorically." Thus manifest is it that he rejected the corporeal manducation of the Church at Rome. He also warns men against approaching God through any other mediator or advocate than Jesus Christ, affirming that He alone was conceived without sin; that He is the only Redeemer, and that He is the one foundation of the Church. "If any one," says Allix, "will take the pains to examine the opinions of this bishop, he will find it a hard thing not to take notice that he denies what the Church of Rome affirms with relation

⁶"This is not bodily but spiritual food," says St. Ambrose, in his *Book of Mysteries and Sacraments*, "for the body of the Lord is spiritual." (Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 2, cent. 4.)

⁷Allix, *Churches of Piedmont*, chap. 4.

⁸*Ibid.*, chap. 5.

to all these articles, and that he affirms what the Church of Rome denies.”⁹

It must be acknowledged that these men, despite their great talents and their ardent piety, had not entirely escaped the degeneracy of their age. The light that was in them was partly mixed with darkness. Even the great Ambrose was touched with a veneration for relics, and a weakness for other superstitious of his times. But as regards the cardinal doctrines of salvation, the faith of these men was essentially Protestant, and stood out in bold antagonism to the leading principles of the Roman creed. And such, with more or less of clearness, must be held to have been the profession of the pastors over whom they presided. And the Churches they ruled and taught were numerous and widely planted. They flourished in the towns and villages which dot the vast plain that stretches like a garden for 200 miles along the foot of the Alps; they existed in those romantic and fertile valleys over which the great mountains hang their pine forests and snows, and, passing the summit, they extended into the southern provinces of France, even as far as to the Rhone, on the banks of which Polycarp, the disciple of John, in early times had planted the Gospel, to be watered in the succeeding centuries by the blood of thousands of martyrs.

[21] Darkness gives relief to the light, and error necessitates a fuller development and a clearer definition of truth. On this principle the ninth century produced the most remarkable perhaps of all those great champions who strove to set limits to the growing superstition, and to preserve, pure and undefiled, the faith which apostles had preached. The mantle of Ambrose descended on Claudius, Archbishop of Turin. This man beheld with dismay the stealthy approaches of a power which, putting out the eyes of men, bowed their necks to its yoke, and bent their knees to idols. He grasped the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and the battle which he so courageously waged, delayed, though it could not prevent, the fall of his Church's independence, and for two centuries longer the light continued to shine at the foot of the Alps. Claudius was an earnest and indefatigable student of Holy Scripture. That Book carried him back to the first age, and set him down at the feet of

⁹Allix, Churches of Piedmont, chap. 8..988

apostles, at the feet of One greater than apostles; and, while darkness was descending on the earth, around Claude still shone the day.

The truth, drawn from its primeval fountains, he proclaimed throughout his diocese, which included the valleys of the Waldenses. Where his voice could not reach, he labored to convey instruction by his pen. He wrote commentaries on the Gospels; he published expositions of almost all the epistles of Paul, and several books of the Old Testament; and thus he furnished his contemporaries with the means of judging how far it became them to submit to a jurisdiction so manifestly usurped as that of Rome, or to embrace tenets so undeniably novel as those which she was now foisting upon the world.¹⁰ The sum of what Claude maintained was that there is but one Sovereign in the Church, and He is not on earth; that Peter had no superiority over the other apostles, save in this, that he was the first who preached the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles; that human merit is of no avail for salvation, and that faith alone saves us. On this cardinal point he insists with a clearness and breadth which remind one of Luther. The authority of tradition he repudiates, prayers for the dead he condemns, as also the notion that the Church cannot err. As regards relics, instead of holiness he can find in them nothing but rottenness, and advises that they be instantly returned to the grave, from which they ought never to have been taken.

Of the Eucharist, he writes in his commentary on Matthew (A.D. 815) in a way which shows that he stood at the greatest distance from the opinions which Paschasius Radbertus broached eighteen years afterwards. Paschasius Radbertus, a monk, afterwards Abbot of Corbei, pretended to explain with precision the manner in which the body and blood of Christ are present in the Eucharist. He published (831) a treatise, "Concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ." His doctrine amounted to the two following propositions:

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¹⁰"Of all these works there is nothing printed," says Allix (p. 60), "but his commentary upon the Epistle to the Galatians. The monks of St. Germain have his commentary upon all the epistles in MS., in two volumes, which were found in the library of the Abbey of Fleury, near Orleans. They have also his MS. commentaries on Leviticus, which formerly belonged to the library of St. Remy at Rheims. As for his commentary on St. Matthew, there are several MS. copies of it in England, as well as elsewhere." See also list of his works in Dupin.

1. Of the bread and wine nothing remains after consecration but the outward figure, under which the body and blood of Christ are really and locally present.

2. This body present in the Eucharist is the same body that was born of the Virgin, that suffered upon the cross, and was raised from the grave.

This new doctrine excited the astonishment of not a few, and called forth several powerful opponents - amongst others, Johannes Scotus.¹¹ Claudius, however, thought that the Lord's Supper was a memorial of Christ's death, and not a repetition of it, and that the elements of bread and wine were only symbols of the flesh and blood of the Savior.¹² It is clear from this that transubstantiation was unknown in the ninth century to the Churches at the foot of the Alps. Nor was it the Bishop of Turin only who held this doctrine of the Eucharist; we are entitled to infer that the bishops of neighboring dioceses, both north and south of the Alps, shared the opinion of Claude. For though they differed from him on some other points, and did not conceal their difference, they expressed no dissent from his views respecting the Sacrament, and in proof of their concurrence in his general policy, strongly urged him to continue his expositions of the Sacred Scriptures. Specially was this the case as regards two leading ecclesiastics of that day, Jonas, Bishop of Orleans, and the Abbot Theodemirus. Even in the century following, we find certain bishops of the north of Italy saying that "wicked men eat the goat and not the lamb," language wholly incomprehensible from the lips of men who believe in transubstantiation.¹³

[22] The worship of images was then making rapid strides. The Bishop of Rome was the great advocate of this ominous innovation; it was on this point that Claude fought his great battle. He resisted it with all the logic of his pen and all the force of his eloquence; he condemned the practice as idolatrous, and he purged those churches in his diocese which had begun to admit representations of saints and divine persons within their walls, not even sparing the cross itself.

¹¹See Mosheim, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 9.

¹²"Hic [panis] ad corpus Christi mystice, illud [vinum] refertur ad sanguinem" (MS. of Com. on Matthew.)

¹³Allix, chap. 10.

¹⁴ It is instructive to mark that the advocates of images in the ninth century justified their use of them by the very same arguments which Romanists employ at this day; and that Claude refutes them on the same ground taken by Protestant writers still. We do not worship the image, say the former, we use it simply as the medium through which our worship ascends to Him whom the image represents; and if we kiss the cross we do so in adoration of Him who died upon it. But, replied Claude - as the Protestant polemic at this hour replies in kneeling to the image, or kissing the cross, you do what the second commandment forbids, and what the Scripture condemns as idolatry. Your worship terminates in the image, and is the worship not of God, but simply of the image. With his argument the Bishop of Turin mingles at times a little raillery. "God commands one thing," says he, "and these people do quite the contrary. God commands us to bear our cross, and not to worship it; but these are all for worshipping it, whereas they do not bear it at all. To serve God after this manner is to go away from Him. For if we ought to adore the cross because Christ was fastened to it, how many other things are there which touched Jesus Christ! Why don't they adore mangers and old clothes, because He was laid in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes? Let them adore asses, because He, entered into Jerusalem upon the foal of an ass."¹⁵

On the subject of the Roman primacy, he leaves it in no wise doubtful what his sentiments were. "We know very well," says he, "that this passage of the Gospel is very ill understood - 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church: and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' under pretense of which words the stupid and ignorant common people, destitute of all spiritual knowledge, betake themselves to Rome in hopes of acquiring eternal life. The ministry belongs to all the true superintendents and

¹⁴Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 9. The worship of images was decreed by the second Council of Nice; but that decree was rejected by France, Spain, Germany, and the diocese of Milan. The worship of images was moreover condemned by the Council of Frankfort, 794. Claude, in his letter to Theodemir, says: - "Appointed bishop by Louis, I came to Turin. I found all the churches full of the filth of abominations and images... If Christians venerate the images of saints, they have not abandoned idols, but only changed their names." (*Mag. Bib.*, tome 4, part 2, p. 149.)

¹⁵Allix, chap. 9.

pastors of the Church, who discharge the same as long as they are in this world; and when they have paid the debt of death, others succeed in their places, who enjoy the same authority and power. Know thou that he only is apostolic who is the keeper and guardian of the apostle's doctrine, and not he who boasts himself to be seated in the chair of the apostle, and in the meantime doth not acquit himself of the charge of the apostle.”¹⁶

We have dwelt the longer on Claude, and the doctrines which he so powerfully advocated by both voice and pen, because, although the picture of his times - a luxurious clergy but an ignorant people, Churches growing in magnificence but declining in piety, images adored but the true God forsaken - is not a pleasant one, yet it establishes two points of great importance. The first is that the Bishop of Rome had not yet succeeded in compelling universal submission to his jurisdiction; and the second that he had not yet been able to persuade all the Churches of Christendom to adopt his novel doctrines, and follow his peculiar customs. Claude was not left to fight that battle alone, nor was he crushed as he inevitably would have been, had Rome been the dominant power it came soon thereafter to be. On the contrary, this Protestant of the ninth century received a large amount of sympathy and support both from bishops and from synods of his time. Agobardus, the Bishop of Lyons, fought by the side of his brother of Turin¹⁷ In fact, he was as great an iconoclast as Claude himself.¹⁸ The emperor, Louis the Pious (le Debonnaire), summoned a Council (824) of “the most learned and judicious bishops of his realm,” says Dupin, to discuss this question. For in that age the emperors summoned synods and appointed bishops. And when the Council had assembled, did it wait till Peter should speak, or a Papal allocution had decided the point? “It knew no other way,” says Dupin, “to settle the question, than by determining what they should find upon the most impartial examination to be true, by plain text of Holy Scripture, and the judgment of the Fathers.”¹⁹ This Council at Paris justified most of the

¹⁶Allix, pp. 76, 77.

¹⁷Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 9.

¹⁸Allix, chap. 9.

¹⁹Dupin, vol. 7, p. 2; Lond., 1695.

principles for which Claude had contended,²⁰ as the great Council at Frankfort (794) had done before it. It is worthy of notice further, as bearing on this point, that only two men stood up publicly to oppose Claude during the twenty years he was incessantly occupied in this controversy. The first was Dungulas, a recluse of the Abbey of St. Denis, an Italian, it is believed, and biased naturally in favor of the opinions of the Pope; and the second was Jonas, Bishop of Orleans, who differed from Claude on but the one question of images, and only to the extent of tolerating their use, but condemning as idolatrous their worship - a distinction which it is easy to maintain in theory, but impossible to observe, as experience has demonstrated, in practice.

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And here let us interpose an observation. We speak at times of the signal benefits which the "Church" conferred upon the Gothic nations during the Middle Ages. She put herself in the place of a mother to those barbarous tribes; she weaned them from the savage usages of their original homes; she bowed their stubborn necks to the authority of law; she opened their minds to the charms of knowledge and art; and thus laid the foundation of those civilized and prosperous communities which have since arisen in the West. But when we so speak it behooves us to specify with some distinctness what we mean by the "Church" to which we ascribe the glory of this service. Is it the Church of Rome, or is it the Church universal of Christendom? If we mean the former, the facts of history do not bear out our conclusion. The Church of Rome was not then the Church, but only one of many Churches. The slow but beneficent and laborious work of evangelizing and civilizing the Northern nations, was the joint result of the action of all the Churches - of Northern Italy, of France, of Spain, of Germany, of Britain - and each performed its part in this great work with a measure of success exactly corresponding to the degree in which it retained the pure principles of primitive Christianity. The Churches would have done their task much more effectually and speedily but for the adverse influence of Rome. She hung upon their rear, by her perpetual attempts to bow them to her yoke, and to seduce them from their first purity to her thinly disguised paganisms. Emphatically, the power that molded the Gothic nations, and planted

²⁰Allix, cent. 9.

among them the seeds of religion and virtue, was Christianity - that same Christianity which apostles preached to men in the first age, which all the ignorance and superstition of subsequent times had not quite extinguished, and which, with immense toil and suffering dug up from under the heaps of rubbish that had been piled above it, was anew, in the sixteenth century, given to the world under the name of Protestantism.

Chapter 6: The Waldenses - Their Valleys

Submission of the Churches of Lombardy to Rome—The Old Faith maintained in the Mountains—The Waldensian Churches—Question of their Antiquity—Approach to their Mountains—Arrangement of their Valleys—Picture of blended Beauty and Grandeur

Picture: The Valley of Angrogna

Picture: Monte Castelluzzo and the Waldensian Temple

When Claude died it can hardly be said that his mantle was taken up by any one. The battle, although not altogether dropped, was henceforward languidly maintained. Before this time not a few Churches beyond the Alps had submitted to the yoke of Rome, and that arrogant power must have felt it not a little humiliating to find her authority withstood on what she might regard as her own territory. She was venerated abroad but contemned at home. Attempts were renewed to induce the Bishops of Milan to accept the episcopal pall, the badge of spiritual vassalage, from the Pope; but it was not till the middle of the eleventh century (1059), under Nicholas II., that these attempts were successful. ¹ Petrus Damianus, Bishop of Ostia, and Anselm, Bishop of Lucca, were dispatched by the Pontiff to receive the submission of the Lombard Churches, and the popular tumults amid which that submission was extorted sufficiently show that the spirit of Claude still lingered at the foot of the Alps. Nor did the clergy conceal the regret with which they laid their ancient liberties at the feet of a power before which the whole earth was then bowing down; for the Papal legate, Damianus, informs us that the clergy of Milan maintained in his presence, “That the Ambrosian Church, according to the ancient institutions of the Fathers, was always free, without being subject to the laws of Rome, and that the Pope of

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¹Baronius, Annal., ann. 1059, tom. 11, cols. 276, 277.

Rome had no jurisdiction over their Church as to the government or constitution of it.”²

But if the plains were conquered, not so the mountains. A considerable body of Protesters stood out against this deed of submission. Of these some crossed the Alps, descended the Rhine, and raised the standard of opposition in the diocese of Cologne, where they were branded as Manicheans, and rewarded with the stake. Others retired into the valleys of the Piedmontese Alps, and there maintained their scriptural faith and their ancient independence. What we have just related respecting the dioceses of Milan and Turin settles the question, in our opinion, of the apostolicity of the Churches of the Waldensian valleys. It is not necessary to show that missionaries were sent from Rome in the first age to plant Christianity in these valleys, nor is it necessary to show that these Churches have existed as distinct and separate communities from early days; enough that they formed a part, as unquestionably they did, of the great evangelical Church of the north of Italy. This is the proof at once of their apostolicity and their independence. It attests their descent from apostolic men, if doctrine be the life of Churches. When their co-religionists on the plains entered within the pale of the Roman jurisdiction, they retired within the mountains, and, spurning alike the tyrannical yoke and the corrupt tenets of the Church of the Seven Hills, they preserved in its purity and simplicity the faith their fathers had handed down to them. Rome manifestly was the schismatic, she it was that had abandoned what was once the common faith of Christendom, leaving by that step to all who remained on the old ground the indisputably valid title of the True Church.

Behind this rampart of mountains, which Providence, foreseeing the approach of evil days, would almost seem to have reared on purpose, did the remnant of the early apostolic Church of Italy kindle their lamp, and here did that lamp continue to burn all through the long night which descended on Christendom. There is a singular concurrence of evidence in favor of their high antiquity. Their traditions invariably point to an unbroken descent from the earliest times, as regards their religious belief. The Nobla Leycon, which

²Petrus Damianus, *Opusc.*, p. 5. Allix, *Churches of Piedmont*, p. 113. M'Crie, *Hist. of Reform. in Italy*, p. 2..989

dates from the year 1100,³ goes to prove that the Waldenses of Piedmont did not owe their rise to Peter Waldo of Lyons, who did not appear till the latter half of that century (1160). The *Nobla Leycon*, though a poem, is in reality a confession of faith, and could have been composed only after some considerable study of the system of Christianity, in contradistinction to the errors of Rome. How could a Church have arisen with such a document in her hands? Or how could these herdsmen and vine-dressers, shut up in their mountains, have detected the errors against which they bore testimony, and found their way to the truths of which they made open profession in times of darkness like these? If we grant that their religious beliefs were the heritage of former ages, handed down from an evangelical ancestry, all is plain; but if we maintain that they were the discovery of the men of those days, we assert what approaches almost to a miracle. Their greatest enemies, Claude Seyssel of Turin (1517), and Reynerius the Inquisitor (1250), have admitted their antiquity, and stigmatized them as “the most dangerous of all heretics, because the most ancient.”

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Rorengo, Prior of St. Roch, Turin (1640), was employed to investigate the origin and antiquity of the Waldenses, and of course had access to all the Waldensian documents in the ducal archives, and being their bitter enemy he may be presumed to have made his report not more favorable than he could help. Yet he states that “they were not a new sect in the ninth and tenth centuries, and that Claude of Turin must have detached them from the Church in the ninth century.”

Within the limits of her own land did God provide a dwelling for this venerable Church. Let us bestow a glance upon the region. As one comes from the south, across the level plain of Piedmont, while yet nearly a hundred miles off, he sees the Alps rise before him, stretching like a great wall along the horizon. From the gates of the morning to those of the setting sun, the mountains run on in a line of towering magnificence. Pasturages and chestnut-forests clothe their base; eternal snows crown their summits. How varied are their forms! Some rise strong and massy as castles; others shoot up tall

³Recent German criticism refers the *Nobla Leycon* to a more recent date, but still one anterior to the Reformation.

and tapering like needles; while others again run along in serrated lines, their summits torn and cleft by the storms of many thousand winters. At the hour of sunrise, what a glory kindles along the crest of that snowy rampart! At sunset the spectacle is again renewed, and a line of pyres is seen to burn in the evening sky.

Drawing nearer the hills, on a line about thirty miles west of Turin, there opens before one what seems a great mountain portal. This is the entrance to the Waldensian territory. A low hill drawn along in front serves as a defense against all who may come with hostile intent, as but too frequently happened in times gone by, while a stupendous monolith - the Castelluzzo - shoots up to the clouds, and stands sentinel at the gate of this renowned region. As one approaches La Torre the Castelluzzo rises higher and higher, and irresistibly fixes the eye by the perfect beauty of its pillar-like form. But to this mountain a higher interest belongs than any that mere symmetry can give it. It is indissolubly linked with martyr-memories, and borrows a halo from the achievements of the past. How often, in days of old, was the confessor hurled sheer down its awful steep and dashed on the rocks at its foot! And there, commingled in one ghastly heap, growing ever the bigger and ghastlier as another and yet another victim was added to it, lay the mangled bodies of pastor and peasant, of mother and child! It was the tragedies connected with this mountain mainly that called forth Milton's well-known sonnet: -

“Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold. * * * In Thy book record their groans Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold, Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that roll'd Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans The vales redoubled to the hills, and they to heaven.”

The elegant temple of the Waldenses rises near the foot of the Castelluzzo.

The Waldensian valleys are seven in number; they were more in ancient times, but the limits of the Vaudois territory have undergone repeated curtailment, and now only the number we have stated remain, lying between Pinerolo on the east and Monte Viso on the west - that pyramidal hill which forms so prominent an object from every part of the plain of Piedmont, towering as it does above the

surrounding mountains, and, like a horn of silver, cutting the ebon of the firmament.

The first three valleys run out somewhat like the spokes of a wheel, the spot on which we stand - the gateway, namely - being the nave. The first is Luserna, or Valley of Light. It runs right out in a grand gorge of some twelve miles in length by about two in width. It wears a carpeting of meadows, which the waters of the Pelice keep ever fresh and bright. A profusion of vines, acacias, and mulberry-trees fleck it with their shadows; and a wall of lofty mountains encloses it on either hand. The second is Rora, or Valley of Dews. It is a vast cup, some fifty miles in circumference, its sides luxuriantly clothed with meadow and corn-field, with fruit and forest trees, and its rim formed of craggy and spiky mountains, many of them snow-clad. The third is Angrogna, or Valley of Groans. Of it we shall speak more particularly afterwards. Beyond the extremity of the first three valleys are the remaining four, forming, as it were, the rim of the wheel. These last are enclosed in their turn by a line of lofty and craggy mountains, which form a wall of defense around the entire territory. Each valley is a fortress, having its own gate of ingress and egress, with its caves, and rocks, and mighty chestnut-trees, forming places of retreat and shelter, so that the highest engineering skill could not have better adapted each several valley to its end. It is not less remarkable that, taking all these valleys together, each is so related to each, and the one opens so into the other, that they may be said to form one fortress of amazing and matchless strength - wholly impregnable, in fact. All the fortresses of Europe, though combined, would not form a citadel so enormously strong, and so dazzlingly magnificent, as the mountain dwelling of the Vaudois. "The Eternal, our God," says Leger "having destined this land to be the theater of His marvels, and the bulwark of His ark, has, by natural means, most marvelously fortified it." The battle begun in one valley could be continued in another, and carried round the entire territory, till at last the invading foe, overpowered by the rocks rolled upon him from the mountains, or assailed by enemies which would start suddenly out of the mist or issue from some unsuspected cave, found retreat impossible, and, cut off in detail, left his bones to whiten the mountains he had come to subdue.

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These valleys are lovely and fertile, as well as strong. They are watered by numerous torrents, which descend from the snows of the summits. The grassy carpet of their bottom; the mantling vine and the golden grain of their lower slopes; the chalets that dot their sides, sweetly embowered amid fruit-trees; and, higher up, the great chestnut-forests and the pasture-lands, where the herdsmen keep watch over their flocks all through the summer days and the starlit nights: the nodding crags, from which the torrent leaps into the light; the rivulet, singing with quiet gladness in the shady nook; the mists, moving grandly among the mountains, now veiling, now revealing their majesty; and the far-off summits, tipped with silver, to be changed at eve into gleaming gold - make up a picture of blended beauty and grandeur, not equaled perhaps, and certainly not surpassed, in any other region of the earth.

In the heart of their mountains is situated the most interesting, perhaps, of all their valleys. It was in this retreat, walled round by "hills whose heads touch heaven," that their barbes or pastors, from all their several parishes, were wont to meet in annual synod. It was here that their college stood, and it was here that their missionaries were trained, and, after ordination, were sent forth to sow the good seed, as opportunity offered, in other lands. Let us visit this valley. We ascend to it by the long, narrow, and winding Angrogna. Bright meadows enliven its entrance. The mountains on either hand are clothed with the vine, the mulberry, and the chestnut. Anon the valley contracts. It becomes rough with projecting rocks, and shady with great trees. A few paces farther, and it expands into a circular basin, feathery with birches, musical with falling waters, environed atop by naked crags, fringed with dark pines, while the white peak looks down upon one out of heaven. A little in advance the valley seems shut in by a mountainous wall, drawn right across it; and beyond, towering sublimely upward, is seen an assemblage of snow-clad Alps, amid which is placed the valley we are in quest of, where burned of old the candle of the Waldenses. Some terrible convulsion has rent this mountain from top to bottom, opening a path through it to the valley beyond. We enter the dark chasm, and proceed along on a narrow ledge in the mountain's side, hung half-way between the torrent, which is heard thundering in the abyss below, and the summits which lean over us above. Journeying thus for about two

miles, we find the pass beginning to widen, the light to break in, and now we arrive at the gate of the Pra.

There opens before us a noble circular valley, its grassy bottom watered by torrents, its sides dotted with dwellings and clothed with corn-fields and pasturages, while a ring of white peaks guards it above. This was the inner sanctuary of the Waldensian temple. The rest of Italy had turned aside to idols, the Waldensian territory alone had been reserved for the worship of the true God. And was it not meet that on its native soil a remnant of the apostolic Church of Italy should be maintained, that Rome and all Christendom might have before their eyes a perpetual monument of what they themselves had once been, and a living witness to testify how far they had departed from their first faith? ⁴

⁴This short description of the Waldensian valleys is drawn from the author's personal observations. He may here be permitted to state that he has, in successive journeys, continued at intervals during the past thirty-five years, traveled over Christendom, and visited all the countries, Popish and Protestant, of which he will have occasion particularly to speak in the course of this history.

Chapter 7: The Waldenses - Their Missions and Martyrdoms

Their Synod and College—Their Theological Tenets—Romaunt
Version of the New Testament—The Constitution of their
Church—Their Missionary Labours—Wide Diffusion of their
Tenets—The Stone Smiting the Image

Picture: Waldensian Missionaries in Guise of Pedlars

Picture: The Martyrdom of Constantine of Samesata

One would like to have a near view of the barbes or pastors, who presided over the school of early Protestant theology that existed here, and to know how it fared with evangelical Christianity in the ages that preceded the Reformation. But the time is remote, and the events are dim. We can but doubtfully glean from a variety of sources the facts necessary to form a picture of this venerable Church, and even then the picture is not complete. The theology of which this was one of the fountainheads was not the clear, well-defined, and comprehensive system which the sixteenth century gave its; it was only what the faithful men of the Lombard Churches had been able to save from the wreck of primitive Christianity. True religion, being a revelation, was from the beginning complete and perfect; nevertheless, in this as in every other branch of knowledge, it is only by patient labor that man is able to extricate and arrange all its parts, and to come into the full possession of truth. The theology taught in former ages, in the peak-environed valley in which we have in imagination placed ourselves, was drawn from the Bible. The atoning death and justifying righteousness of Christ was its cardinal truth. This, the Nobla Leycon and other ancient documents abundantly testify. The Nobla Leycon sets forth with tolerable clearness the doctrine of the Trinity, the fall of man, the incarnation of the Son, the perpetual authority of the Decalogue as given by God,¹ the need of Divine grace in order to good works, the necessity

¹This disproves the charge of Manicheism brought against them by their enemies.

of holiness, the institution of the ministry, the resurrection of the body, and the eternal bliss of heaven.² This creed, its professors exemplified in lives of evangelical virtue. The blamelessness of the Waldenses passed into a proverb, so that one more than ordinarily exempt from the vices of his time was sure to be suspected of being a Vaudes.³

If doubt there were regarding the tenets of the Waldenses, the charges which their enemies have preferred against them would set that doubt at rest, and make it tolerably certain that they held substantially what the apostles before their day, and the Reformers after it, taught. The indictment against the Waldenses included a formidable list of “heresies.” They held that there had been no true Pope since the days of Sylvester; that temporal offices and dignities were not meet for preachers of the Gospel; that the Pope’s pardons were a cheat; that purgatory was a fable; that relics were simply rotten bones which had belonged to no one knew whom; that to go on pilgrimage served no end, save to empty one’s purse; that flesh might be eaten any day if one’s appetite served him; that holy water was not a whit more efficacious than rain water; and that prayer in a barn was just as effectual as if offered in a church. They were accused, moreover, of having scoffed at the doctrine of transubstantiation, and of having spoken blasphemously of Rome, as the harlot of the Apocalypse.⁴

There is reason to believe, from recent historical researches, that the Waldenses possessed the New Testament in the vernacular. The “Lingua Romana” or Romaunt tongue was the common language of the south of Europe from the eighth to the fourteenth century. It was the language of the troubadours and of men of letters in the Dark Ages. Into this tongue - the Romaunt - was the first translation of the whole of the New Testament made so early as the twelfth century. This fact Dr. Gilly has been at great pains to prove in his work, *The*

²Sir Samuel Morland gives the *Nobla Leycon* in full in his *History of the Churches of the Waldenses*. Allix (chap. 18) gives a summary of it.

³The *Nobla Leycon* has the following passage: - “If there be an honest man, who desires to love God and fear Jesus Christ, who will neither slander, nor swear, nor lie, nor commit adultery, nor kill, nor steal, nor avenge himself of his enemies, they presently say of such a one he is a Vaudes, and worthy of death.”

⁴See a list of numerous heresies and blasphemies charged upon the Waldenses by the Inquisitor Reynerius, who wrote about the year 1250, and extracted by Allix (chap. 22).

[29] Romaunt Version ⁵ of the Gospel according to John. The sum of what Dr. Gilly, by a patient investigation into facts, and a great array of historic documents, maintains, is that all the books of the New Testament were translated from the Latin Vulgate into the Romaunt, that this was the first literal version since the fall of the empire, that it was made in the twelfth century, and was the first translation available for popular use. There were numerous earlier translations, but only of parts of the Word of God, and many of these were rather paraphrases or digests of Scripture than translations, and, moreover, they were so bulky, and by consequence so costly, as to be utterly beyond the reach of the common people. This Romaunt version was the first complete and literal translation of the New Testament of Holy Scripture; it was made, as Dr Gilly, by a chain of proofs, shows, most probably under the superintendence and at the expense of Peter Waldo of Lyons, not later than 1180, and so is older than any complete version in German, French, Italian, Spanish, or English. This version was widely spread in the south of France, and in the cities of Lombardy. It was in common use among the Waldenses of Piedmont, and it was no small part, doubtless, of the testimony borne to truth by these mountaineers to preserve and circulate it. Of the Romaunt New Testament six copies have come down to our day. A copy is preserved at each of the four following places, Lyons, Grenoble, Zurich, Dublin; and two copies are at Paris. These are plain and portable volumes, contrasting with those splendid and ponderous folios of the Latin Vulgate, penned in characters of gold and silver, richly illuminated, their bindings decorated with gems, inviting admiration rather than study, and unfitted by their size and splendor for the use of the people.

The Church of the Alps, in the simplicity of its constitution, may be held to have been a reflection of the Church of the first centuries. The entire territory included in the Waldensian limits was divided into parishes. In each parish was placed a pastor, who led his flock to the living waters of the Word of God. He preached, he dispensed the Sacraments, he visited the sick, and catechized the young. With him was associated in the government of his congregation a consistory

⁵The Romaunt Version of the Gospel according to John, from MS. preserved in Trinity College, Dublin, and in the Bibliotheque du Roi, Paris. By William Stephen Gilly, D.D., Canon of Durham, and Vicar of Norham. Lond., 1848.

of laymen. The synod met once a year. It was composed of all the pastors, with an equal number of laymen, and its most frequent place of meeting was the secluded mountain-engirdled valley at the head of Angrogna. Sometimes as many as a hundred and fifty barbes, with the same number of lay members, would assemble. We can imagine them seated - it may be on the grassy slopes of the valley - a venerable company of humble, learned, earnest men, presided over by a simple moderator (for higher office or authority was unknown amongst them), and intermitting their deliberations respecting the affairs of their Churches, and the condition of their flocks, only to offer their prayers and praises to the Eternal, while the majestic snow-clad peaks looked down upon them from the silent firmament. There needed, verily, no magnificent fane, no blazonry of mystic rites to make their assembly august.

The youth who here sat at the feet of the more venerable and learned of their barbes used as their text-book the Holy Scriptures. And not only did they study the sacred volume; they were required to commit to memory, and be able accurately to recite, whole Gospels and Epistles. This was a necessary accomplishment on the part of public instructors, in those ages when printing was unknown, and copies of the Word of God were rare. Part of their time was occupied in transcribing the Holy Scriptures, or portions of them, which they were to distribute when they went forth as missionaries. By this, and by other agencies, the seed of the Divine Word was scattered throughout Europe more widely than is commonly supposed. To this a variety of causes contributed. There was then a general impression that the world was soon to end. Men thought that they saw the prognostications of its dissolution in the disorder into which all things had fallen. The pride, luxury, and profligacy of the clergy led not a few laymen to ask if better and more certain guides were not to be had. Many of the troubadours were religious men, whose lays were sermons. The hour of deep and universal slumber had passed; the serf was contending with his seigneur for personal freedom, and the city was waging war with the baronial castle for civic and corporate independence. The New Testament - and, as we learn from incidental notices, portions of the Old - coming at this juncture, in a language understood alike in the court as in the camp, in the city as in the rural hamlet, was welcome to many, and its truths

obtained a wider promulgation than perhaps had taken place since the publication of the Vulgate by Jerome.

[30] After passing a certain time in the school of the barbes, it was not uncommon for the Waldensian youth to proceed to the seminaries in the great cities of Lombardy, or to the Sorbonne at Paris. There they saw other customs, were initiated into other studies, and had a wider horizon around them than in the seclusion of their native valleys. Many of them became expert dialecticians, and often made converts of the rich merchants with whom they traded, and the landlords in whose houses they lodged. The priests seldom cared to meet in argument the Waldensian missionary.

To maintain the truth in their own mountains was not the only object of this people. They felt their relations to the rest of Christendom. They sought to drive back the darkness, and re-conquer the kingdoms which Rome had overwhelmed. They were an evangelistic as well as an evangelical Church. It was an old law among them that all who took orders in their Church should, before being eligible to a home charge, serve three years in the mission field. The youth on whose head the assembled barbes laid their hands saw in prospect not a rich benefice, but a possible martyrdom. The ocean they did not cross. Their mission field was the realms that lay outspread at the foot of their own mountains. They went forth two and two, concealing their real character under the guise of a secular profession, most commonly that of merchants or peddlers. They carried silks, jewelry, and other articles, at that time not easily purchasable save at distant marts, and they were welcomed as merchants where they would have been spurned as missionaries. The door of the cottage and the portal of the baron's castle stood equally open to them. But their address was mainly shown in vending, without money and without price, rarer and more valuable merchandise than the gems and silks which [31] had procured them entrance. They took care to carry with them, [32] concealed among their wares or about their persons, portions of the Word of God, their own transcription commonly, and to this they would draw the attention of the inmates. When they saw a desire to possess it, they would freely make a gift of it where the means to purchase were absent.

There was no kingdom of Southern and Central Europe to which these missionaries did not find their way, and where they did not

leave traces of their visit in the disciples whom they made. On the west they penetrated into Spain. In Southern France they found congenial fellow-laborers in the Albigenses, by whom the seeds of truth were plentifully scattered over Dauphine and Languedoc. On the east, descending the Rhine and the Danube, they leavened Germany, Bohemia, and Poland ⁶ with their doctrines, their track being marked with the edifices for worship and the stakes of martyrdom that arose around their steps. Even the Seven-hilled City they feared not to enter, scattering the seed on ungenial soil, if perchance some of it might take root and grow. Their naked feet and coarse woolen garments made them somewhat marked figures, in the streets of a city that clothed itself in purple and fine linen; and when their real errand was discovered, as sometimes chanced, the rulers of Christendom took care to further, in their own way, the springing of the seed, by watering it with the blood of the men who had sowed it. ⁷

Thus did the Bible in those ages, veiling its majesty and its mission, travel silently through Christendom, entering homes and hearts, and there making its abode. From her lofty seat Rome looked down with contempt upon the Book and its humble bearers. She aimed at bowing the necks of kings, thinking if they were obedient meaner men would not dare revolt, and so she took little heed of a power which, weak as it seemed, was destined at a future day to break in pieces the fabric of her dominion. By-and-by she began to be uneasy, and to have a boding of calamity. The penetrating eye of Innocent III. detected the quarter whence danger was to arise. He saw in the labours of these humble men the beginning of a movement which, if permitted to go on and gather strength, would one day sweep away all that it had taken the toils and intrigues of centuries to achieve. He straightway commenced those terrible crusades which wasted the sowers but watered the seed, and helped

⁶Stranski, apud Lenfant's *Concile de Constance*, quoted by Count Valerian Krasinski in his *History of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Reformation in Poland*, vol. 1, p. 53; Lond., 1838. Illyricus Flaccius, in his *Catalogus Testium Veritatis* (Amstelodami, 1679), says: "Pars Valdensium in Germaniam transiit atque apud Bohemos, in Polonia ac Livonia sedem fixit." Leger says that the Waldenses had, about the year 1210, Churches in Slavonia, Sarmatia, and Livonia. (*Histoire Generale des Eglises Evangeliques des Vallees du Piedmont ou Vaudois*. vol. 2, pp. 336, 337; 1669.)990

⁷M'Crie, *Hist. Ref. in Italy*, p. 4.

to bring on, at its appointed hour, the catastrophe which he sought to avert.⁸

⁸Those who wish to know more of this interesting people than is contained in the above rapid sketch may consult Leger, *Des Eglises Evangeliques*; Perrin, *Hist. De Vaudois*; Reynerius, *Cont. Waldens.*; Sir. S. Morland, *History of the Evangelical Churches of Piedmont*; Jones, *Hist. Waldenses*; Rorengo, *Narative*; besides a host of more modern writers - Gilly, *Waldensian Researches*; Muston, *Israed of the Alps*; Monastier, etc. etc.

Chapter 8: The Paulicians

The Paulicians the Protesters against the Eastern, as the Waldenses against the Western Apostasy—Their Rise in A.D.

653—Constantine of Samosata—Their Tenets

Scriptural—Constantine Stoned to Death—Simeon Succeeds—Is put to Death—Sergius—His Missionary Travels—Terrible Persecutions—The Paulicians Rise in Arms—Civil War—The Government Triumphs—Dispersion of the Paulicians over the West—They Blend with the Waldenses—Movement in the South of Europe—The Troubadour, the Barbe, and the Bible, the Three Missionaries—Innocent III—The Crusades

Picture: Troubadour and Barbe

Picture: Dominican Monk and Inquisitor

Besides this central and main body of oppositionists to Rome - Protestants before Protestantism - placed here as in an impregnable fortress, upreared on purpose, in the very center of Roman Christendom, other communities and individuals arose, and maintained a continuous line of Protestant testimony all along to the sixteenth century. These we shall compendiously group and rapidly describe. First, there are the Paulicians. They occupy an analogous place in the East to that which the Waldenses held in the West. Some obscurity rests upon their origin, and additional mystery has on purpose been cast over it, but a fair and impartial examination of the matter leaves no doubt that the Paulicians are the remnant that escaped the apostasy of the Eastern Church, just as the Waldenses are the remnant saved from the apostasy of the Western Church. Doubt, too, has been thrown upon their religious opinions; they have been painted as a confederacy of Manicheans, just as the Waldenses were branded as a synagogue of heretics; but in the former case, as in the latter, an examination of the matter satisfies us that these imputations had no sufficient foundation, that the Paulicians repudiated the errors imputed to them, and that as a body their opinions were

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in substantial agreement with the doctrine of Holy Writ. Nearly all the information we have of them is that which Petrus Siculus, their bitter enemy, has communicated. He visited them when they were in their most flourishing condition, and the account he has given of their distinguishing doctrines sufficiently proves that the Paulicians had rejected the leading errors of the Greek and Roman Churches; but it fails to show that they had embraced the doctrine of Manes,¹ or were justly liable to be styled Manicheans.

In A.D. 653, a deacon returning from captivity in Syria rested a night in the house of an Armenian named Constantine, who lived in the neighborhood of Samosata. On the morrow, before taking his departure, he presented his host with a copy of the New Testament. Constantine studied the sacred volume. A new light broke upon his mind: the errors of the Greek Church stood clearly revealed, and he instantly resolved to separate himself from so corrupt a communion. He drew others to the study of the Scriptures, and the same light shone into their minds which had irradiated his. Sharing his views, they shared with him his secession from the established Church of the Empire. It was the boast of this new party, now grown to considerable numbers, that they adhered to the Scriptures, and especially to the writings of Paul. "I am Sylvanus," said Constantine, "and ye are Macedonians," intimating thereby that the Gospel which he would teach, and they should learn, was that of Paul; hence the name of Paulicians, a designation they would not have been ambitious to wear had their doctrine been Manichean.²

¹Manes taught that there were two principles, or gods, the one good and the other evil; and that the evil principle was the creator of this world, the good principle of the world to come. Manicheism was employed as a term of compendious condemnation in the East, as Heresy was in the West. It was easier to calumniate these men than to refute them. For such aspersions a very ancient precedent might be pleaded. "He hath a devil and is mad," was said of the Master. The disciple is not above his Lord.

²"Among the prominent charges urged against the Paulicians before the Patriarch of Constantinople in the eighth century, and by Photius and Petrus Siculus in the ninth, we find the following - that they dishonored the Virgin Mary, and rejected her worship; denied the life-giving efficacy of the cross, and refused it worship; and gainsaid the awful mystery of the conversion of the blood of Christ in the Eucharist; while by others they are branded as the originators of the Iconoclastic heresy and the war against the sacred images. In the first notice of the sectaries in Western Europe, I mean at Orleans, they were similarly accused of treating with contempt the worship of martyrs and saints, the sign

These disciples multiplied. A congenial soil favored their increase, for in these same mountains, where are placed the sources of the Euphrates, the Nestorian remnant had found a refuge. The attention of the Government at Constantinople was at length turned to them, and persecution followed. Constantine, whose zeal, constancy, and piety had been amply tested by the labours of twenty-seven years, was stoned to death. From his ashes arose a leader still more powerful. Simeon, an officer of the palace who had been sent with a body of troops to superintend his execution, was converted by his martyrdom; and, like Paul after the stoning of Stephen, forthwith began to preach the faith which he had once persecuted. Simeon ended his career, as Constantine had done, by sealing his testimony with his blood; the stake being planted beside the heap of stones piled above the ashes of Constantine.

Still the Paulicians multiplied; other leaders arose to fill the place of those who had fallen, and neither the anathemas of the hierarchy nor the sword of the State could check their growth. All through the eighth century they continued to flourish. The worship of images was now the fashionable superstition in the Eastern Church, and the Paulicians rendered themselves still more obnoxious to the Greek authorities, lay and clerical, by the strenuous opposition which they offered to that idolatry of which the Greeks were the great advocates and patrons. This drew upon them yet sorer persecution. It was now, in the end of the eighth century, that the most remarkable perhaps of all their leaders, Sergius, rose to head them, a man of truly missionary spirit and of indomitable energy. Petrus Siculus has given us an account of the conversion of Sergius. We should take it for a satire, were it not for the manifest earnestness and simplicity of the writer. Siculus tells us that Satan appeared to Sergius in the shape of an old woman, and asked him why he did not read the New Testament? The tempter proceeded further to recite portions of Holy Writ, whereby Sergius was seduced to read the Scripture, and so perverted to heresy; and “from sheep,” says Siculus, “turned

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of the holy cross, and mystery of transubstantiation; and much the same too at Arras.”
(Elliott, *Horoe Apocalypticoe*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, p. 277.)

numbers into wolves, and by their means ravaged the sheepfolds of Christ.”³

During thirty-four years, and in the course of innumerable journeys, he preached the Gospel from East to West, and converted great numbers of his countrymen. The result was more terrible persecutions, which were continued through successive reigns. Foremost in this work we find the Emperor Leo, the Patriarch Nicephorus, and notably the Empress Theodora. Under the latter it was affirmed, says Gibbon, “that one hundred thousand Paulicians were extirpated by the sword, the gibbet, or the flames.” It is admitted by the same historian that the chief guilt of many of those who were thus destroyed lay in their being Iconoclasts.⁴

The sanguinary zeal of Theodora kindled a flame which had well-nigh consumed the Empire of the East. The Paulicians, stung by these cruel injuries, now prolonged for two centuries, at last took up arms, as the Waldenses of Piedmont, the Hussites of Bohemia, and the Huguenots of France did in similar circumstances. They placed their camp in the mountains between Sewas and Trebizond, and for thirty-five years (A.D. 845 - 880) the Empire of Constantinople was afflicted with the calamities of civil war. Repeated victories, won over the troops of the emperor, crowned the arms of the Paulicians, and at length the insurgents were joined by the Saracens, who hung on the frontier of the Empire. The flames of battle extended into the heart of Asia; and as it is impossible to restrain the ravages of the sword when once unsheathed, the Paulicians passed from a righteous defense to an inexcusable revenge. Entire provinces were wasted, opulent cities were sacked, ancient and famous churches were turned into stables, and troops of captives were held to ransom or delivered to the executioner. But it must not be forgotten that the original cause of these manifold miseries was the bigotry of the government and the zeal of the clergy for image-worship. The fortune of war at last declared in favor of the troops of the emperor, and the insurgents were driven back into their mountains, where

³“Multos ex ovibus lupos fecit, et per eos Christi ovilia dissipavit.” (Pet. Sic., Hist. Bib. Patr., vol. 16, p. 761.)

⁴Gibbon, vol. 10, p. 177; Edin., 1832. Sharon Turner, Hist. of England, vol. 5, p. 125; Lond., 1830..991

for a century afterwards they enjoyed a partial independence, and maintained the profession of their religious faith.

After this, the Paulicians were transported across the Bosphorus, and settled in Thrace. ⁵ This removal was begun by the Emperor Constantine Copronymus in the middle of the eighth century, was continued in successive colonies in the ninth, and completed about the end of the tenth. The shadow of the Saracenic woe was already blackening over the Eastern Empire, and God removed His witnesses betimes from the destined scene of judgment. The arrival of the Paulicians in Europe was regarded with favor rather than disapproval. Rome was becoming by her tyranny the terror and by her profligacy the scandal of the West, and men were disposed to welcome whatever promised to throw additional weight into the opposing scale. The Paulicians soon spread themselves over Europe, and though no chronicle records their dispersion, the fact is attested by the sudden and simultaneous outbreak of their opinions in many of the Western countries. ⁶ They mingled with the hosts of the Crusaders returning from the Holy Land through Hungary and Germany; they joined themselves to the caravans of merchants who entered the harbor of Venice and the gates of Lombardy; or they followed the Byzantine standard into Southern Italy, and by these various routes settled themselves in the West. ⁷ They incorporated with the preexisting bodies of oppositionists, and from this time a new life is seen to animate the efforts of the Waldenses of Piedmont, the Albigenses of Southern France, and of others who, in other parts of Europe, revolted by the growing superstitions, had begun to retrace their steps towards the primeval fountains of truth. "Their opinions," says Gibbon, "were silently propagated in Rome, Milan, and the kingdoms beyond the Alps. It was soon discovered that many thousand Catholics of every rank, and of either sex, had embraced the Manichean heresy." ⁸

⁵Pet. Sic., p. 814.

⁶Emericus, in his Directory for Inquisitors, gives us the following piece of news, namely, that the founder of the Manicheans was a person called Manes, who lived in the diocese of Milan! (Allix, p. 134.)

⁷Mosheim, Eccl. Hist., cent. 11, part 2, chap. 5.

⁸Gibbon, Decline and Fall, vol. 10, p. 186. In perusing the chapter (54) which this historian has devoted to an account of the Paulicians, one hardly knows whether to be

[35] From this point the Paulician stream becomes blended with that of the other early confessors of the Truth. To these we now return.

When we cast our eyes over Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, our attention is irresistibly riveted on the south of France. There a great movement is on the eve of breaking out. Cities and provinces are seen rising in revolt against the Church of Rome. Judging from the aspect of things on the surface, one would have inferred that all opposition to Rome had died out. Every succeeding century was deepening the foundations and widening the limits of the Romish Church, and it seemed now as if there awaited her ages of quiet and unchallenged dominion. It is at this moment that her power begins to totter; and though she will rise higher ere terminating her career, her decadence has already begun, and her fall may be postponed, but cannot be averted. But how do we account for the powerful movement that begins to show itself at the foot of the Alps, at a moment when, as it seems, every enemy has been vanquished, and Rome has won the battle? To attack her now, seated as we behold her amid vassal kings, obedient nations, and entrenched behind a triple rampart of darkness, is surely to invite destruction.

The causes of this movement had been long in silent operation. In fact, this was the very quarter of Christendom where opposition to the growing tyranny and superstitions of Rome might be expected first to show itself. Here it was that Polycarp and Irenaeus had labored. Over all those goodly plains which the Rhone waters, and in those numerous cities and villages over which the Alps stretch their shadows, these apostolic men had planted Christianity. Hundreds of thousands of martyrs had here watered it with their blood, and though a thousand years well-nigh had passed since that day, the story of their terrible torments and heroic deaths had not been altogether forgotten. In the Cottian Alps and the province of Languedoc, Vigilantius had raised his powerful protest against the errors of his times. This region was included, as we have seen, in the diocese of Milan, and, as a consequence, it enjoyed the light which shone

more delighted with his eloquence or amazed at his inconsistency. At one time he speaks of them as the "votaries of St. Paul and of Christ," and at another as the disciples of Manes. And though he says that "the Paulicians sincerely condemned the memory and opinions of the Manichean sect," he goes on to write of them as Manicheans. The historian has too slavishly followed his chief authority and their bitter enemy, Petrus Siculus.

on the south of the Alps long after Churches not a few on the north of these mountains were plunged in darkness. In the ninth century Claude of Turin had found in the Archbishop of Lyons, Agobardus, a man willing to entertain his views and to share his conflicts. Since that time the night had deepened here as everywhere else. But still, as may be conceived, there were memories of the past, there were seeds in the soil, which new forces might quicken and make to spring up. Such a force did now begin to act.

It was, moreover, on this spot, and among these peoples - the best prepared of all the nations of the West - that the Word of God was first published in the vernacular. When the Romance version of the New Testament was issued, the people that sat in darkness saw a great light. This was in fact a second giving of Divine Revelation to the nations of Europe; for the early Saxon renderings of portions of Holy Writ had fallen aside and gone utterly into disuse; and though Jerome's translation, the Vulgate, was still known, it was in Latin, now a dead language, and its use was confined to the priests, who though they possessed it cannot be said to have known it; for the reverence paid it lay in the rich illuminations of its writing, in the gold and gems of its binding, and the curiously-carved and costly cabinets in which it was locked up, and not in the earnestness with which its pages were studied. Now the nations of Southern Europe could read, each in "the tongue wherein he was born," the wonderful works of God.

This inestimable boon they owed to Peter Valdes or Waldo, a rich merchant in Lyons, who had been awakened to serious thought by the sudden death of a companion, according to some, by the chance lay of a traveling troubadour, according to others. We can imagine the wonder and joy of these people when this light broke upon them through the clouds that environed them. But we must not picture to ourselves a diffusion of the Bible, in those ages, at all so wide and rapid as would take place in our day when copies can be so easily multiplied by the printing press. Each copy was laboriously produced by the pen; its price corresponded to the time and labor expended in its production; it had to be carried long distances, often by slow and uncertain conveyances; and, last of all, it had to encounter the frowns and ultimately the prohibitory edicts of a hostile hierarchy. But there were compensatory advantages. Difficulties

but tended to whet the desire of the people to obtain the Book, and when once their eyes lighted on its page, its truths made the deeper an impression on their minds. It stood out in its sublimity from the fables on which they had been fed. The conscience felt that a greater than man was speaking from its page. Each copy served scores and hundreds of readers.

[36] Besides, if the mechanical appliances were lacking to those ages, which the progress of invention has conferred on ours, there existed a living machinery which worked indefatigably. The Bible was sung in the lays of troubadours and minnesingers. It was recited in the sermons of barbes. And these efforts reacted on the Book from which they had sprung, by leading men to the yet more earnest perusal and the yet wider diffusion of it. The Troubadour, the Barbe, and, mightiest of all, the Bible, were the three missionaries that traversed the south of Europe. Disciples were multiplied: congregations were formed: barons, cities, provinces, joined the movement. It seemed as if the Reformation was come. Not yet. Rome had not filled up her cup; nor had the nations of Europe that full and woeful demonstration they have since received, how crushing to liberty, to knowledge, to order, is her yoke, to induce them to join universally in the struggle to break it.

[37] Besides, it happened, as has often been seen at historic crises of the Papacy, that a Pope equal to the occasion filled the Papal throne. Of remarkable vigor, of dauntless spirit, and of sanguinary temper, Innocent III. but too truly guessed the character and divined the issue of the movement. He sounded the tocsin of persecution. Mail-clad abbots, lordly prelates, “who wielded by turns the crosier, the scepter, and the sword;”⁹ barons and counts ambitious of enlarging their domains, and mobs eager to wreak their savage fanaticism on their neighbors, whose persons they hated and whose goods they coveted, assembled at the Pontiff’s summons. Fire and sword speedily did the work of extermination. Where before had been seen smiling provinces, flourishing cities, and a numerous, virtuous, and orderly population, there was now a blackened and silent desert. That nothing might be lacking to carry on this terrible work, Innocent III. set up the tribunal of the Inquisition. Behind the soldiers of the

⁹Gibbon, vol. 10, p. 185.

Cross marched the monks of St. Dominic, and what escaped the sword of the one perished by the racks of the other. In one of those dismal tragedies not fewer than a hundred thousand persons are said to have been destroyed.¹⁰ Over wide areas not a living thing was left: all were given to the sword. Mounds of ruins and ashes alone marked the spot where cities and villages had formerly stood. But this violence recoiled in the end on the power which had employed it. It did not extinguish the movement: it but made the roots strike deeper, to spring up again and again, and each time with greater vigor and over a wider area, till at last it was seen that Rome by these deeds was only preparing for Protestantism a more glorious triumph, and for herself a more signal overthrow. [38]

But these events are too intimately connected with the early history of Protestantism, and they too truly depict the genius and policy of that power against which Protestantism found it so hard a matter to struggle into existence, to be passed over in silence, or dismissed with a mere general description. We must go a little into detail.

¹⁰Gerdesius, *Historia Evangelii Renovati*, tom. 1, p. 39; Groningae, 1744.

Chapter 9: Crusades Against the Albigenses

Rome founded on the Dogma of Persecution—Begins to act upon it—Territory of the Albigenses—Innocent III—Persecuting Edicts of Councils—Crusade preached by the Monks of Citeaux—First Crusade launched—Paradise—Simon de Montfort—Raymond of Toulouse—His Territories Overrun and Devastated—Crusade against Raymond Roger of Beziers—Burning of his Towns—Massacre of their Inhabitants—Destruction of the Albigenses

Picture: View of Toulouse

Picture: View in Rome: the Island of the Tiber

The torch of persecution was fairly kindled in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Those baleful fires, which had smoldered since the fall of the Empire, were now re-lighted, but it must be noted that this was the act not of the State but of the Church. Rome had founded her dominion upon the dogma of persecution. She sustained herself “Lord of the conscience.” Out of this prolific but pestiferous root came a whole century of fulminating edicts, to be followed by centuries of blazing piles.

It could not be but that this maxim, placed at the foundation of her system, should inspire and mold the whole policy of the Church of Rome. Divine mistress of the conscience and of the faith, she claimed the exclusive right to prescribe to every human being what he was to believe, and to pursue with temporal and spiritual terrors every form of worship different from her own, till she had chased it out of the world. The first exemplification, on a great scale, of her office which she gave mankind was the crusades. As the professors of an impure creed, she pronounced sentence of extermination on the Saracens of the Holy Land; she sent thither some millions of crusaders to execute her ban; and the lands, cities, and wealth of the slaughtered infidels she bestowed upon her orthodox sons. If it was right to apply this principle to one pagan country, we do not see what

should hinder Rome - unless indeed lack of power - from sending her missionaries to every land where infidelity and heresy prevailed, emptying them of their evil creed and their evil inhabitants together, and re-peopling them anew with a pure race from within her own orthodox pale.

But now the fervor of the crusades had begun sensibly to abate. The result had not responded either to the expectations of the Church that had planned them, or to the masses that had carried them out. The golden crowns of Paradise had been all duly bestowed, doubtless, but of course on those of the crusaders only who had fallen; the survivors had as yet inherited little save wounds, poverty, and disease. The Church, too, began to see that the zeal and blood which were being so freely expended on the shores of Asia might be turned to better account nearer home. The Albigenses and other sects springing up at her door were more dangerous foes of the Papacy than the Saracens of the distant East. For a while the Popes saw with comparative indifference the growth of these religious communities; they dreaded no harm from bodies apparently so insignificant; and even entertained at times the thought of grafting them on their own system as separate orders, or as resuscitating and purifying forces. With the advent of Innocent III., however, came a new policy. He perceived that the principles of these communities were wholly alien in their nature to those of the Papacy, that they never could be made to work in concert with it, and that if left to develop themselves they would most surely effect its overthrow. Accordingly the cloud of exterminating vengeance which rolled in the skies of the world, whithersoever he was pleased to command, was ordered to halt, to return westward, and discharge its chastisement on the South of Europe.

Let us take a glance at the region which this dreadful tempest is about to smite. The France of those days, instead of forming an entire monarchy, was parted into four grand divisions. It is the most southerly of the four, or Narbonne-Gaul, to which our attention is now to be turned. This was an ample and goodly territory, stretching from the Dauphinese Alps on the east to the Pyrenees on the southwest, and comprising the modern provinces of Dauphine, Provence, Languedoc or Gascogne. It was watered throughout by the Rhone, which descended upon it from the north, and it was washed along its

southern boundary by the Mediterranean. Occupied by an intelligent population, it had become under their skillful husbandry one vast expanse of corn-land and vineyard, of fruit and forest tree. To the riches of the soil were added the wealth of commerce, in which the inhabitants were tempted to engage by the proximity of the sea and the neighborhood of the Italian republics. Above all, its people were addicted to the pursuits of art and poetry. It was the land of the troubadour. It was further embellished by the numerous castles of a powerful nobility, who spent their time in elegant festivities and gay tournaments.

But better things than poetry and feats of mimic war flourished here. The towns, formed into communes, and placed under municipal institutions, enjoyed no small measure of freedom. The lively and poetic genius of the people had enabled them to form a language of their own - namely, the Provençal. In richness of vocables, softness of cadence, and picturesqueness of idiom, the Provençal excelled all the languages of Europe, and promised to become the universal tongue of Christendom. Best of all, a pure Christianity was developing in the region. It was here, on the banks of the Rhone, that Irenaeus and the other early apostles of Gaul had labored, and the seeds which their hands had deposited in its soil, watered by the blood of martyrs who had fought in the first ranks in the terrible combats of those days, had never wholly perished. Influences of recent birth had helped to quicken these seeds into a second growth. Foremost among these was the translation of the New Testament into the Provençal, the earliest, as we have shown, of all our modern versions of the Scriptures. The barons protected the people in their evangelical sentiments, some because they shared their opinions, others because they found them to be industrious and skillful cultivators of their lands. A cordial welcome awaited the troubadour at their castle-gates; he departed loaded with gifts; and he enjoyed the baron's protection as he passed on through the cities and villages, concealing, not unfrequently, the colporteur and missionary under the guise of the songster. The hour of a great revolt against Rome appeared to be near. Surrounded by the fostering influences of art, intelligence, and liberty, primitive Christianity was here powerfully developing itself. It seemed verily that the thirteenth and not the

sixteenth century would be the date of the Reformation, and that its cradle would be placed not in Germany but in the south of France.

The penetrating and far-seeing eye of Innocent III. saw all this very clearly. Not at the foot of the Alps and the Pyrenees only did he detect a new life: in other countries of Europe, in Italy, in Spain, in Flanders, in Hungary - wherever, in short, dispersion had driven the sectaries, he discovered the same fermentation below the surface, the same incipient revolt against the Papal power. He resolved without loss of time to grapple with and crush the movement. He issued an edict enjoining the extermination of all heretics.¹ Cities would be drowned in blood, kingdoms would be laid waste, art and civilization would perish, and the progress of the world would be rolled back for centuries; but not otherwise could the movement be arrested, and Rome saved.

A long series of persecuting edicts and canons paved the way for these horrible butcheries. The Council of Toulouse, in 1119, presided over by Pope Calixtus II., pronounced a general excommunication upon all who held the sentiments of the Albigenses, cast them out of the Church, delivered them to the sword of the State to be punished, and included in the same condemnation all who should afford them defense or protection.² This canon was renewed in the second General Council of Lateran, 1179, under Innocent II.³ Each succeeding Council strove to excel its predecessor in its sanguinary and pitiless spirit. The Council of Tours, 1163, under Alexander III., stripped the heretics of their goods, forbade, under peril of excommunication, any to relieve them, and left them to perish without succour.⁴ The third General Council of Lateran, 1179, under Alexander III., enjoined princes to make war upon them, to

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¹Hardouin, Concil. Avenion. (1209), tom. 6, pars. 2, col. 1986. This edict enjoins bishops, counts, governors of castles, and all men-at-arms to give their aid to enforce spiritual censures against heretics. "Si opus fuerit," continues the edict, "jurare compellat sicut illi de Montepessulano juraverunt, praecipue circa exterminandos haereticos."

²"Tanquam haereticos ab ecclesia Dei pellimus et damnamus: et per porestates exterius coerceri praecipimus, defensores quoque ipsorum ejusdem damnationis vinculo donec resipuerint, mancipamus." (Concilium Tolosanum - Hardouin, Acta Concil. et. Epistolae Decretales, tom. 6, pars. 2, p. 1979; Parisiis, 1714.)

³Acta Concil., tom. 6, pars. 2, p. 1212.

⁴"Ubi cogniti fuerint illius haeresis sectatores, ne receptaculum quisquam eis in terra sua praebere, aut praesidium impertire praesumat. Sed nec in venditione aut erptione

take their possessions for a spoil, to reduce their persons to slavery, and to withhold from them Christian burial.⁵ The fourth General Council of Lateran bears the stern and comprehensive stamp of the man under whom it was held. The Council commanded princes to take an oath to extirpate heretics from their dominions. Fearing that some, from motives of self-interest, might hesitate to destroy the more industrious of their subjects, the Council sought to quicken their obedience by appealing to their avarice. It made over the heritages of the excommunicated to those who should carry out the sentence pronounced upon them. Still further to stimulate to this pious work, the Council rewarded a service of forty days in it with the same ample indulgences which had aforesaid been bestowed on those who served in the distant and dangerous crusades of Syria. If any prince should still hold back, he was himself, after a year's grace, to be smitten with excommunication, his vassals were to be loosed from their allegiance, and his lands given to whoever had the will or the power to seize them, after having first purged them of heresy. That this work of extirpation might be thoroughly done, the bishops were empowered to make an annual visitation of their dioceses, to institute a very close search for heretics, and to extract an oath from the leading inhabitants that they would report to the ecclesiastics from time to time those among their neighbors and acquaintances who had strayed from the faith.⁶ It is hardly necessary to say that it is Innocent III. who speaks in this Council. It was assembled in his palace of the Lateran in 1215; it was one of the most brilliant Councils that ever were convened, being composed of 800 abbots and priors, 400 bishops, besides patriarchs, deputies, and ambassadors from all nations. It was opened by Innocent in person, with a discourse from the words, "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you."

We cannot pursue farther this series of terrific edicts, which runs on till the end of the century and into the next. Each is like that which went before it, save only that it surpasses it in cruelty and terror. The fearful pillagings and massacrings which instantly followed

aliqua cum eis omnino commercium habetur: ut solatio saltem humanitatis amisso, ab errore viae suae respiscere compellantur." - Hardouin, *Acta Concil.*, tom. 6, p. 1597..992

⁵Ibid., can. 27, *De Haereticis*, p. 1684.

⁶Ibid., tom. 7, can. 3, pp. 19-23.

in the south of France, and which were re-enacted in following centuries in all the countries of Christendom, were but too faithful transcripts, both in spirit and letter, of these ecclesiastical enactments. Meanwhile, we must note that it is out of the chair of the Pope - out of the dogma that the Church is mistress of the conscience - that this river of blood is seen to flow.

Three years was this storm in gathering. Its first heralds were the monks of Citeaux, sent abroad by Innocent III. in 1206 to preach the crusade throughout France and the adjoining kingdoms. There followed St. Dominic and his band, who traveled on foot, two and two, with full powers from the Pope to search out heretics, dispute with them, and set a mark on those who were to be burned when opportunity should offer. In this mission of inquisition we see the first beginnings of a tribunal which came afterwards to bear the terrible name of the "Inquisition." These gave themselves to the work with an ardour which had not been equaled since the times of Peter the Hermit. The fiery orators of the Vatican but too easily succeeded in kindling the fanaticism of the masses. War was at all times the delight of the peoples among whom this mission was discharged; but to engage in this war what dazzling temptations were held out! The foes they were to march against were accursed of God and the Church. To shed their blood was to wash away their own sins - it was to atone for all the vices and crimes of a lifetime. And then to think of the dwellings of the Albigenses, replenished with elegances and stored with wealth, and of their fields blooming with the richest cultivation, all to become the lawful spoil of the crossed invader! But this was only a first installment of a great and brilliant recompense in the future. They had the word of the Pope that at the moment of death they should find the angels prepared to carry them aloft, the gates of Paradise open for their entrance, and the crowns and delights of the upper world waiting their choice. The crusader of the previous century had to buy forgiveness with a great sum: he had to cross the sea, to face the Saracen, to linger out years amid unknown toils and perils, and to return - if he should ever return - with broken health and ruined fortune. But now a campaign of forty days in one's own country, involving no hardship and very little risk, was all that was demanded for one's eternal salvation. Never before had Paradise been so cheap!

[41] The preparations for this war of extermination went on throughout the years 1207 and 1208. Like the mutterings of the distant thunder or the hoarse roar of ocean when the tempest is rising, the dreadful sounds filled Europe, and their echoes reached the doomed provinces, where they were heard with terror. In the spring of 1209 these armed fanatics were ready to march,⁷ One body had assembled at Lyons. Led by Arnold, Abbot of Citeaux and legate of the Pope, it descended by the valley of the Rhone. A second army gathered in the Agenois under the Archbishop of Bordeaux. A third horde of militant pilgrims marshaled in the north, the subjects of Philip Augustus, and at their head marched the Bishop of Puy.⁸ The near neighbors of the Albigenses rose in a body, and swelled this already overgrown host. The chief director of this sacred war was the Papal legate, the Abbot of Citeaux. Its chief military commander was Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester a French nobleman, who had practiced war and learnt cruelty in the crusades of the Holy Land. In putting himself at the head of these crossed and fanatical hordes he was influenced, it is believed, quite as much by a covetous greed of the ample and rich territories of Raymond, Count of Toulouse, as by hatred of the heresy that Raymond was suspected of protecting. The number of crusaders who now put themselves in motion is variously estimated at from 50,000 to 500,000. The former is the reckoning of the Abbot of Vaux Cernay, the Popish chronicler of the war; but his calculation, says Sismondi, does not include “the ignorant and fanatical multitude which followed each preacher armed with scythes and clubs, and promised to themselves that if they were not in a condition to combat the knights of Languedoc, they might, at least, be able to murder the women and children of the heretics.”⁹

This overwhelming host precipitated itself upon the estates of Raymond VI., Count of Toulouse. Seeing the storm approach, he was seized with dread, wrote submissive letters to Rome, and offered to accept whatever terms the Papal legate might please to dictate. As the price of his reconciliation, he had to deliver up to the Pope seven of his strongest towns, to appear at the door of the Church, where the dead body of the legate Castelneau, who had been murdered

⁷Sismondi, *Hist. of Crusades*, p. 28.

⁸Petri Vallis, *Cern. Hist. Albigens.*, cap. 16, p. 571. Sismondi, p. 30.

⁹Sismondi, p. 29.

in his dominions, lay, and to be there beaten with rods. ¹⁰ Next, a rope was put about his neck, and he was dragged by the legate to the tomb of the friar, in the presence of several bishops and an immense multitude of spectators. After all this, he was obliged to take the cross, and join with those who were seizing and plundering his cities, massacring his subjects, and carrying fire and sword throughout his territories. Stung by these humiliations and calamities, he again changed sides. But his resolution to brave the Papal wrath came too late. He was again smitten with interdict; his possessions were given to Simon de Montfort, and in the end he saw himself reft of all. ¹¹

Among the princes of the region now visited with this devastating scourge, the next in rank and influence to the Count of Toulouse was the young Raymond Roger, Viscount of Beziers. Every day this horde of murderers drew nearer and nearer to his territories. Submission would only invite destruction. He hastened to put his kingdom into a posture of defense. His vassals were numerous and valiant, their fortified castles covered the face of the country; of his towns, two, Beziers and Carcassonne, were of great size and strength, and he judged that in these circumstances it was not too rash to hope to turn the brunt of the impending tempest. He called round him his armed knights, and told them that his purpose was to fight: many of them were Papists, as he himself was; but he pointed to the character of the hordes that were approaching, who made it their sole business to drown the earth in blood, without much distinction whether it was Catholic or Albigensian blood that they spilled. His knights applauded the resolution of their young and brave liege lord.

The castles were garrisoned and provisioned, the peasantry of the surrounding districts gathered into them, and the cities were provided against a siege. Placing in Beziers a number of valiant knights, and telling the inhabitants that their only hope of safety lay in making a stout defense, Raymond shut himself up in Carcassonne, and waited the approach of the army of crusaders. Onward came the host: before them a smiling country, in their rear a piteous picture of devastation - battered castles, the blackened walls and towers of

¹⁰Hardouin, *Concil. Montil.*, tom. 6, pars. 2, p. col. 1980.

¹¹Hardouin, *Concil. Lateran.* 4., tom. 7, p. 79.

silent cities, homesteads in ashes, and a desert scathed with fire and stained with blood.

[42] In the middle of July, 1209, the three bodies of crusaders arrived, and sat down under the walls of Beziers. The stoutest heart among its citizens quailed, as they surveyed from the ramparts this host that seemed to cover the face of the earth. "So great was the assemblage," says the old chronicle, "both of tents and pavilions, that it appeared as if all the world was collected there."¹² Astonished but not daunted, the men of Beziers made a rush upon the pilgrims before they should have time to fortify their encampment. It was all in vain. The assault was repelled, and the crusaders, mingling with the citizens as they hurried back to the town in broken crowds, entered the gates along with them, and Beziers was in their hands before they had even formed the plan of attack. The knights inquired of the Papal legate, the Abbot of Citeaux, how they might distinguish the Catholics from the heretics. Arnold at once cut the knot which time did not suffice to loose by the following reply, which has since become famous; "Kill all! kill all! The Lord will know His own."¹³

The bloody work now began. The ordinary population of Beziers was some 15,000; at this moment it could not be less than four times its usual number, for being the capital of the province, and a place of great strength, the inhabitants of the country and the open villages had been collected into it. The multitude, when they saw that the city was taken, fled to the churches, and began to toll the bells by way of supplication. This only the sooner drew upon themselves the swords of the assassins. The wretched citizens were slaughtered in a trice. Their dead bodies covered the floor of the church; they were piled in heaps round the altar; their blood flowed in torrents at the door. "Seven thousand dead bodies," says Sismondi, "were counted in the Magdalen alone. When the crusaders had massacred the last living creature in Beziers, and had pillaged the houses of all that they thought worth carrying off, they set fire to the city in every part at once, and reduced it to a vast funeral pile. Not a house remained standing, not one human being alive. Historians differ as to the number of victims. The Abbot of Citeaux, feeling some shame

¹²Historia de los Faicts d'Armas de Tolosa, pp. 9, 10. quoted by Sismondi, p. 35.

¹³Caesar, Hiesterbachiensis, lib. 5, cap. 21. In Bibliotheca Patrum Cisterciensium, tom. 2, p. 139, Sismondi, p. 36.

for the butchery which he had ordered, in his letter to Innocent III. reduces it to 15,000; others make it amount to 60,000.”¹⁴

The terrible fate which had overtaken Beziers - in one day converted into a mound of ruins dreary and silent as any on the plain of Chaldaea - told the other towns and villages the destiny that awaited them. The inhabitants, terror-stricken, fled to the woods and caves. [43] Even the strong castles were left tenantless, their defenders deeming [44] it vain to think of opposing so furious and overwhelming a host. Pillaging, burning, and massacring as they had a mind, the crusaders advanced to Carcassonne, where they arrived on the 1st of August. The city stood on the right bank of the Aude; its fortifications were strong, its garrison numerous and brave, and the young count, Raymond Roger, was at their head. The assailants advanced to the walls, but met a stout resistance. The defenders poured upon them streams of boiling water and oil, and crushed them with great stones and projectiles. The attack was again and again renewed, but was as often repulsed. Meanwhile the forty days' service was drawing to an end, and bands of crusaders, having fulfilled their term and earned heaven, were departing to their homes. The Papal legate, seeing the host melting away, judged it perfectly right to call wiles to the aid of his arms. Holding out to Raymond Roger the hope of an honorable capitulation, and swearing to respect his liberty, Arnold induced the viscount, with 300 of his knights, to present himself at his tent. "The latter," says Sismondi, "profoundly penetrated with the maxim of Innocent III., that 'to keep faith with those that have it not is an offense against the faith,' caused the young viscount to be arrested, with all the knights who had followed him."

When the garrison saw that their leader had been imprisoned, they resolved, along with the inhabitants, to make their escape overnight by a secret passage known only to themselves - a cavern three leagues in length, extending from Carcassonne to the towers of Cabardes. The crusaders were astonished on the morrow, when not a man could be seen upon the walls; and still more mortified was the Papal legate to find that his prey had escaped him, for his purpose was to make a bonfire of the city, with every man, woman, and child

¹⁴Hist. Gen. de Languedoc, lib. 21, cap. 57, p. 169. Historia de los Faicts d'Armas de Tolosa, p. 10. Sismondi, p. 37.

within it. But if this greater revenge was now out of his reach, he did not disdain a smaller one still in his power. He collected a body of some 450 persons, partly fugitives from Carcassonne whom he had captured, and partly the 300 knights who had accompanied the viscount, and of these he burned 400 alive and the remaining 50 he hanged. ¹⁵

¹⁵Sismondi, *History of the Crusades against the Albigenses*, pp. 40-43.

Chapter 10: Erection of Tribunal of Inquisition

The Crusades still continued in the Albigensian Territory—Council of Toulouse, 1229—Organizes the Inquisition—Condemns the Reading of the Bible in the Vernacular—Gregory IX., 1233, further perfects the Organization of the Inquisition, and commits it to the Dominicans—The Crusades continued under the form of the Inquisition—These Butcheries the deliberate Act of Rome—Revived and Sanctioned by her in our own day—Protestantism of Thirteenth Century Crushed—Not alone—Final Ends

The main object of the crusades was now accomplished. The principalities of Raymond VI., Count of Toulouse, and Raymond Roger, Viscount of Beziers, had been “purged” and made over to that faithful son of the Church, Simon de Montfort. The lands of the Count of Foix were likewise overrun, and joined with the neighboring provinces in a common desolation. The Viscount of Narbonne contrived to avoid a visit of the crusaders, but at the price of becoming himself the Grand Inquisitor of his dominions, and purging them with laws even more rigorous than the Church demanded,¹

The twenty years that followed were devoted to the cruel work of rooting out any seeds of heresy that might possibly yet remain in the soil. Every year a crowd of monks issued from the convents of Citeaux, and, taking possession of the pulpits, preached a new crusade. For the same easy service they offered the same prodigious reward - Paradise - and the consequence was, that every year a new wave of fanatics gathered and rolled toward the devoted provinces. The villages and the woods were searched, and some gleanings, left from the harvests of previous years, were found and made food for the gibbets and stakes that in such dismal array covered the face of the country. The first instigators of these terrible proceedings

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¹Histoire de Languedoc, lib. 21, cap. 58, p. 169. Sismondi, p. 43.

- Innocent III., Simon de Montfort, the Abbot of Citeaux - soon passed from the scene, but the tragedies they had begun went on. In the lands which the Albigenses - now all but extinct - had once peopled, and which they had so greatly enriched by their industry and adorned by their art, blood never ceased to flow nor the flames to devour their victims.

It would be remote from the object of our history to enter here into details, but we must dwell a little on the events of 1229. This year a Council was held at Toulouse, under the Papal legate, the Cardinal of St. Angelo. The foundation of the Inquisition had already been laid. Innocent III. and St. Dominic share between them the merit of this good work.² In the year of the fourth Lateran, 1215, St. Dominic received the Pontiff's commission to judge and deliver to punishment apostate and relapsed and obstinate heretics.³ This was the Inquisition, though lacking as yet its full organization and equipment. That St. Dominic died before it was completed alters not the question touching his connection with its authorship, though of late a vindication of him has been attempted on this ground, only by shifting the guilt to his Church. The fact remains that St. Dominic accompanied the armies of Simon de Montfort, that he delivered the Albigenses to the secular judge to be put to death - in short, worked the Inquisition so far as it had received shape and form in his day. But the Council of Toulouse still further perfected the organization and developed the working of this terrible tribunal. It erected in every city a council of Inquisitors consisting of one priest and three laymen,⁴ whose business it was to search for heretics in towns, houses, cellars, and other lurking-places, as also in caves, woods, and fields, and to denounce them to the bishops, lords, or their bailiffs. Once discovered, a summary but dreadful ordeal conducted them to the stake. The houses of heretics were to be razed to their foundations, and the ground on which they stood condemned and confiscated - for heresy, like the leprosy, polluted the very stones, and timber, and soil. Lords were held responsible for the orthodoxy of their estates, and so far also for those of their neighbors. If remiss in their search, the sharp admonition of the

²Concil. Lateran. 4, can. 8, De Inquisitionibus. Hardouin, tom. 7, col. 26.

³Malvenda, ann. 1215; Alb. Butler, 76. Turner, Hist. Eng., vol 5, p. 103; ed. 1830.

⁴Hardouin, Concilia, tom. 7, p. 175.

Church soon quickened their diligence. A last will and testament was of no validity unless a priest had been by when it was made. A physician suspected was forbidden to practice. All above the age of fourteen were required on oath to abjure heresy, and to aid in the search for heretics.⁵ As a fitting appendage to those tyrannical acts, and a sure and lasting evidence of the real source whence that thing called “heresy,” on the extirpation of which they were so intent, was derived, the same Council condemned the reading of the Holy Scriptures. “We prohibit,” says the fourteenth canon, “the laics from having the books of the Old and New Testament, unless it be at most that any one wishes to have, from devotion, a psalter, a breviary for the Divine offices, or the hours of the blessed Mary; but we forbid them in the most express manner to have the above books translated into the vulgar tongue.”⁶

In 1233, Pope Gregory IX. issued a bull, by which he confided the working of the Inquisition to the Dominicans.⁷ He appointed his legate, the Bishop of Tournay, to carry out the bull in the way of completing the organization of that tribunal which has since become the terror of Christendom, and which has caused to perish such a prodigious number of human beings. In discharge of his commission, the bishop named two Dominicans in Toulouse, and two in each city of the province, to form the Tribunal of the Faith;⁸ and soon, under the warm patronage of Saint Louis (Louis IX.) of France, this court was extended to the whole kingdom. An instruction was at the same time furnished to the Inquisitors, in which the bishop enumerated the errors of the heretics. The document bears undesigned testimony to the Scriptural faith of the men whom the newly-erected court was meant to root out. “In the exposition made by the Bishop of Tournay, of the errors of the Albigenses,” says Sismondi, “we find nearly all the principles upon which Luther and Calvin founded the Reformation of the sixteenth century.”⁹

Although the crusades, as hitherto waged, were now ended, they continued under the more dreadful form of the Inquisition. We say

⁵Concilium Tolosanum, cap. 1, p. 428. Sismondi, 220.

⁶Labbe, Concil. Tolosan., tom. 11, p. 427. Fleury, Hist. Eccles., lib. 79, n. 58.

⁷Percini, Historia Inquisit. Tholosanoe. Mosheim, vol. 1, p. 344; Glas. edit., 1831.

⁸Hist. de Languedoc, lib. 24, cap. 87, p. 394. Sismondi, 243.

⁹Hist. of Crusades against the Albigenses, p. 243.

[46] more dreadful form, for not so terrible was the crusader's sword as the Inquisitor's rack, and to die fighting in the open field or on the ramparts of the beleaguered city, was a fate less horrible than to expire amid prolonged and excruciating tortures in the dungeons of the "Holy Office." The tempests of the crusades, however terrible, had yet their intermissions; they burst, passed away, and left a breathing-space between their explosions. Not so the Inquisition. It worked on and on, day and night, century after century, with a regularity that was appalling. With steady march it extended its area, till at last it embraced almost all the countries of Europe, and kept piling up its dead year by year in ever larger and ghastlier heaps.

These awful tragedies were the sole and deliberate acts of the Church of Rome. She planned them in solemn council, she enunciated them in dogma and canon, and in executing them she claimed to act as the vicegerent of Heaven, who had power to save or to destroy nations. Never can that Church be in fairer circumstances than she was then for displaying her true genius, and showing what she holds to be her real rights. She was in the noon of her power; she was free from all coercion whether of force or of fear; she could afford to be magnanimous and tolerant were it possible she ever could be so; yet the sword was the only argument she condescended to employ. She blew the trumpet of vengeance, summoned to arms the half of Europe, and crushed the rising forces of reason and religion under an avalanche of savage fanaticism. In our own day all these horrible deeds have been reviewed, ratified, and sanctioned by the same Church that six centuries ago enacted them: first in the Syllabus of 1864, which expressly vindicates the ground on which these crusades were done - namely, that the Church of Rome possesses the supremacy of both powers, the spiritual and the temporal; that she has the right to employ both swords in the extirpation of heresy; that in the exercise of this right in the past she never exceeded by a hair's breadth her just prerogatives, and that what she has done aforesaid she may do in time to come, as often as occasion shall require and opportunity may serve. And, secondly, they have been endorsed over again by the decree of Infallibility, which declares that the Popes who planned, ordered, and by their bishops and monks executed all these crimes, were in these, as in all their other official acts, infallibly guided by inspiration. The plea that it was the thirteenth century

when these horrible butcheries were committed, every one sees to be wholly inadmissible. An infallible Church has no need to wait for the coming of the lights of philosophy and science. Her sun is always in the zenith. The thirteenth and the nineteenth century are the same to her, for she is just as infallible in the one as in the other.

So fell, smitten down by this terrible blow, to rise no more in the same age and among the same people, the Protestantism of the thirteenth century. It did not perish alone. All the regenerative forces of a social and intellectual kind which Protestantism even at that early stage had evoked were rooted out along with it. Letters had begun to refine, liberty to emancipate, art to beautify, and commerce to enrich the region, but all were swept away by a vengeful power that was regardless of what it destroyed, provided only it reached its end in the extirpation of Protestantism. How changed the region from what it once was! There the song of the troubadour was heard no more. No more was the gallant knight seen riding forth to display his prowess in the gay tournament; no more were the cheerful voices of the reaper and grape-gatherer heard in the fields. The rich harvests of the region were trodden into the dust, its fruitful vines and flourishing olive-trees were torn up; hamlet and city were swept away; ruins, blood, and ashes covered the face of this now "purified" land.

But Rome was not able, with all her violence, to arrest the movement of the human mind. So far as it was religious, she but scattered the sparks to break out on a wider area at a future day; and so far as it was intellectual, she but forced it into another channel. Instead of Albigensianism, Scholasticism now arose in France, which, after flourishing for some centuries in the schools of Paris, passed into the Skeptical Philosophy, and that again, in our day, into Atheistic Communism. It will be curious if in the future the progeny should cross the path of the parent.

It turned out that this enforced halt of three centuries, after all, resulted only in the goal being more quickly reached. While the movement paused, instrumentalities of prodigious power, unknown to that age, were being prepared to give quicker transmission and wider diffusion to the Divine principle when next it should show itself. And, further, a more robust and capable stock than the Romanesque - namely, the Teutonic - was silently growing up, destined to receive the heavenly graft, and to shoot forth on every side larger

boughs, to cover Christendom with their shadow and solace it with their fruits.

Chapter 11: Protestants Before Protestantism

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Berengarius—The First Opponent of Transubstantiation—Numerous Councils Condemn him—His Recantation—The Martyrs of Orleans—Their Confession—Their Condemnation and Martyrdom—Peter de Bruys and the Petrobrusians—Henri—Effects of his Eloquence—St. Bernard sent to Oppose him—Henri Apprehended—His Fate unknown—Arnold of Brescia—Birth and Education—His Picture of his Times—His Scheme of Reform—Inveighs against the Wealth of the Hierarchy—His Popularity—Condemned by Innocent II. and Banished from Italy—Returns on the Pope's Death—Labours Ten Years in Rome—Demands the Separation of the Temporal and Spiritual Authority—Adrian IV—He Suppresses the Movement—Arnold is Burned

Picture: Albigensian Worshippers on the Banks of the Rhone

Picture: The Orleans Martyrs

Picture: Brescia

Picture: Arnold of Brescia Preaching

In pursuing to an end the history of the Albigensian crusades, we have been carried somewhat beyond the point of time at which we had arrived. We now return. A succession of lights which shine out at intervals amid the darkness of the ages guides our eye onward. In the middle of the eleventh century appears Berengarius of Tours in France. He is the first public opponent of transubstantiation.¹ A century had now passed since the monk, Paschasius Radbertus, had hatched that astounding dogma. In an age of knowledge such a tenet would have subjected its author to the suspicion of lunacy, but in times of darkness like those in which this opinion first issued

¹John Scotus Erigena had already published his book attacking and refuting the then comparatively new and strange idea of Paschasius, viz., that by the words of consecration the bread and wine in the Eucharist became the real and veritable flesh and blood of Christ.

from the convent of Corbei, the more mysterious the doctrine the more likely was it to find believers. The words of Scripture, "this is my body," torn from their context and held up before the eyes of ignorant men, seemed to give some countenance to the tenet. Besides, it was the interest of the priesthood to believe it, and to make others believe it too; for the gift of working a prodigy like this invested them with a superhuman power, and gave them immense reverence in the eyes of the people. The battle that Berengarius now opened enables us to judge of the wide extent which the belief in transubstantiation had already acquired. Everywhere in France, in Germany, in Italy, we find a commotion arising on the appearance of its opponent. We see bishops bestirring themselves to oppose his "impious and sacrilegious" heresy, and numerous Councils convoked to condemn it. The Council of Vercelli in 1049, under Leo IX., which was attended by many foreign prelates, condemned it, and in doing so condemned also, as Berengarius maintained, the doctrine of Ambrose, of Augustine, and of Jerome. There followed a succession of Councils: at Paris, 1050; at Tours, 1055; at Rome, 1059; at Rouen, 1063; at Poitiers, 1075; and again at Rome, 1078: at all of which the opinions of Berengarius were discussed and condemned.² This shows us how eager Rome was to establish the fiction of Paschasius, and the alarm she felt lest the adherents of Berengarius should multiply, and her dogma be extinguished before it had time to establish itself. Twice did Berengarius appear before the famous Hildebrand: first in the Council of Tours, where Hildebrand filled the post of Papal legate, and secondly at the Council of Rome, where he presided as Gregory VII.

The piety of Berengarius was admitted, his eloquence was great, but his courage was not equal to his genius and convictions. When brought face to face with the stake he shrank from the fire. A second and a third time did he recant his opinions; he even sealed his recantation, according to Dupin, with his subscription and oath.³ But no sooner was he back again in France than he began publishing his old opinions anew. Numbers in all the countries of Christendom, who had not accepted the fiction of Paschasius, broke silence, embold-

²Dupin, *Ecccl. Hist.*, cent. 11. *Concil.*, tom. 10; edit. Lab., p. 379.

³Dupin, *Ecccl. Hist.*, cent. 11, chap. 1, p. 9.

ened by the stand made by Berengarius, and declared themselves of the same sentiments. Matthew of Westminster (1087) says, “that Berengarius of Tours, being fallen into heresy, had already almost corrupted all the French, Italians, and English.”⁴ His great opponent was Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, who attacked him not on the head of transubstantiation only, but as guilty of all the heresies of the Waldenses, and as maintaining with them that the Church remained with them alone, and that Rome was “the congregation of the wicked, and the seat of Satan.”⁵ Berengarius died in his bed (1088), expressing deep sorrow for the weakness and dissimulation which had tarnished his testimony for the truth. “His followers,” says Mosheim, “were numerous, as his fame was illustrious.”⁶

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We come to a nobler band. At Orleans there flourished, in the beginning of the eleventh century, two canons, Stephen and Lesoie, distinguished by their rank, revered for their learning, and beloved for their numerous alms-givings. Taught of the Spirit and the Word, these men cherished in secret the faith of the first ages. They were betrayed by a feigned disciple named Arefaste. Craving to be instructed in the things of God, he seemed to listen not with the ear only, but with the heart also, as the two canons discoursed to him of the corruption of human nature and the renewal of the Spirit, of the vanity of praying to the saints, and the folly of thinking to find salvation in baptism, or the literal flesh of Christ in the Eucharist. His earnestness seemed to become yet greater when they promised him that if, forsaking these “broken cisterns,” he would come to the Savior himself, he should have living water to drink, and celestial bread to eat, and, filled with “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” would never know want again. Arefaste heard these things, and returned with his report to those who had sent him.

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⁴Allix, p. 122.

⁵Among other works Berengarius published a commentary on the Apocalypse; this may perhaps explain his phraseology.

⁶Mosheim, *Eccl. Hist.*, cent. 11, part 2, chap. 3, sec. 18. In a foot-note Mosheim quotes the following words as decisive of Berengarius’ sentiments, that Christ’s body is only spiritually present in the Sacrament, and that the bread and wine are only symbols: - “The true body of Christ is set forth in the Supper; but spiritual to the inner man. The incorruptible, uncontaminated, and indestructible body of Christ is to be spiritually eaten [spiritualiter manducari] by those only who are members of Christ.” (Berengarius’ Letter to Almannus in Martene’s *Thesaur.*, tom. 2, p. 109.)

A Council of the bishops of Orleans was immediately summoned, presided over by King Robert of France. The two canons were brought before it. The pretended disciple now became the accuser.⁷ The canons confessed boldly the truth which they had long held; the arguments and threats of the Council were alike powerless to change their belief, or to shake their resolution. "As to the burning threatened," says one, "they made light of it even as if persuaded that they would come out of it unhurt."⁸ Wearied, it would seem, with the futile reasonings of their enemies, and desirous of bringing the matter to an issue, they gave their final answer thus - "You may say these things to those whose taste is earthly, and who believe the figments of men written on parchment. But to us who have the law written on the inner man by the Holy Spirit, and savor nothing but what we learn from God, the Creator of all, ye speak things vain and unworthy of the Deity. Put therefore an end to your words! Do with us even as you wish. Even now we see our King reigning in the heavenly places, who with His right hand is conducting us to immortal triumphs and heavenly joys."⁹

They were condemned as Manicheans. Had they been so indeed, Rome would have visited them with contempt, not with persecution. She was too wise to pursue with fire and sword a thing so shadowy as Manicheism, which she knew could do her no manner of harm. The power that confronted her in these two canons and their disciples came from another sphere, hence the rage with which she assailed it. These two martyrs were not alone in their death. Of the citizens of Orleans there were ten,¹⁰ some say twelve, who shared their faith, and who were willing to share their stake.¹¹ They were first stripped of their clerical vestments, then buffeted like their Master, then smitten with rods; the queen, who was present, setting the example in these acts of violence by striking one of them, and putting out his eye. Finally, they were led outside the city, where a great fire

⁷Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 11, chap. 13.

⁸Rodulphus Glaber, a monk of Dijon, who wrote a history of the occurrence.

⁹"Jam Regem nostrum in coelestibus regnantem videmus; qui ad immortales triumphos dextra sua nos sublevat, dans superna gandia." (*Chartulary of St. Pierre en Vallee at Chartres.*)

¹⁰Hard., *Acta Concil.*, tom. 6, p. 822.

¹¹Mosheim, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 1, p. 270. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 11, chap. 13.

had been kindled to consume them. They entered the flames with a smile upon their faces ¹² Together this little company of fourteen stood at the stake, and then the fire had set them free, together they mounted into the sky; and if they smiled when they entered the flames, how much more when they passed in at the eternal gates! They were burned in the year 1022. So far as the light of history serves us, theirs were the first stakes planted in France since the era of primitive persecutions. ¹³ Illustrious pioneers! They go, but they leave their ineffaceable traces on the road, that the hundreds and thousands of their countrymen who are to follow may not faint, when called to pass through the same torments to the same everlasting joys.

We next mention Peter de Bruys, who appeared in the following century (the twelfth), because it enables us to indicate the rise of, and explain the name borne by, the Petrobrussians. Their founder, who labored in the provinces of Dauphine, Provence, and Languedoc, taught no novelties of doctrine; he trod, touching the faith, in the steps of apostolic men, even as Felix Neff, five centuries later, followed in his. After twenty years of missionary labours, Peter de Bruys was seized and burned to death (1126) ¹⁴ in the town of St. Giles, near Toulouse. The leading tenets professed by his followers, the Petrobrussians, as we learn from the accusations of their enemies, were - that baptism avails not without faith; that Christ is only spiritually present in the Sacrament; that prayers and alms profit not dead men; that purgatory is a mere invention; and that the Church is not made up of cemented stones, but of believing men. This identifies them, in their religious creed, with the Waldenses;

¹²“Ridentes in medio ignis.” (Hard., Acta Concil., tom. 6, p. 822.)

¹³Gibbon has mistakenly recorded their martyrdom as that of Manicheans. Of the trial and deaths of these martyrs, four contemporaneous accounts have come down to us. In addition to the one referred to above, there is the biographical relation of Arefaste, their betrayer, a knight of Rouen; there is the chronicle of Ademar, a monk of St. Martial, who lived at the time of the Council; and there is the narrative of John, a monk of Fleury, near Orleans, written probably within a few weeks of the transaction. Accounts, taken from these original documents, are given in Baronius’ Annals (tom. 11, col. 60, 61; Colon. ed.) and Hardouin’s Councils.

¹⁴Mosheim says 1130. Bossuet, Faber, and others have assigned to Peter de Bruys a Paulician or Eastern origin. We are inclined to connect him with the Western or Waldensian confessors.

[51] and if further evidence were wanted of this, we have it in the treatise which Peter de Clugny published against them, in which he accuses them of having fallen into those errors which have shown such an inveterate tendency to spring up amid the perpetual snows and icy torrents of the Alps. ¹⁵

When Peter de Bruys had finished his course he was succeeded by a preacher of the name of Henri, an Italian by birth, who also gave his name to his followers - the Henricians. Henri, who enjoyed a high repute for sanctity, wielded a most commanding eloquence. The enchantment of his voice was enough, said his enemies, a little envious, to melt the very stones. It performed what may perhaps be accounted a still greater feat; it brought, according to an eye-witness, the very priests to his feet, dissolved in tears. Beginning at Lausanne, Henri traversed the south of France, the entire population gathering round him wherever he came, and listening to his sermons. "His orations were powerful but noxious," said his foes, "as if a whole legion of demons had been speaking through his mouth." St. Bernard was sent to check the spiritual pestilence that was desolating the region, and he arrived not a moment too soon, if we may judge from his picture of the state of things which he found there. The orator was carrying all before him; nor need we wonder if, as his enemies alleged, a legion of preachers spoke in this one. The churches were emptied, the priests were without flocks, and the time-honoured and edifying customs of pilgrimages, of fasts, of invocations of the saints, and oblations for the dead were all neglected. "How many disorders," says St. Bernard, writing to the Count of Toulouse, "do we every day hear that Henri commits in the Church of God! That ravenous wolf is within your dominions, clothed with a sheep's skin, but we know him by his works. The churches are like synagogues, the sanctuary despoiled of its holiness, the Sacraments looked upon as profane institutions, the feast days have lost their solemnity, men grow up in sin, and every day souls are borne away before the terrible tribunal of Christ without first being reconciled to and fortified by the

¹⁵Peter de Cluny's account of them will be found in *Bibliotheca P. Max.* 22, pp. 1034, 1035.

Holy Communion. In refusing Christians baptism they are denied the life of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶

Such was the condition in which, as he himself records in his letters, St. Bernard found the populations in the south of France. He set to work, stemmed the tide of apostasy, and brought back the wanderers from the Roman fold; but whether this result was solely owing to the eloquence of his sermons may be fairly questioned, for we find the civil arm operating along with him. Henri was seized, carried before Pope Eugenius III., who presided at a Council then assembled at Rheims, condemned and imprisoned.¹⁷ From that time we hear no more of him, and his fate can only be guessed at.¹⁸

It pleased God to raise up, in the middle of the twelfth century, a yet more famous champion to do battle for the truth. This was Arnold of Brescia, whose stormy but brilliant career we must briefly sketch. His scheme of reform was bolder and more comprehensive than that of any who had preceded him. His pioneers had called for a purification of the faith of the Church, Arnold demanded a rectification of her constitution. He was a simple reader in the Church of his native town, and possessed no advantages of birth; but, fired with the love of learning, he traveled into France that he might sit at the feet of Abelard, whose fame was then filling Christendom. Admitted a pupil of the great scholastic, he drank in the wisdom he imparted without imbibing along with it his mysticism. The scholar in some respects was greater than the master, and was destined to leave traces more lasting behind him. In subtlety of genius and scholastic lore he made no pretensions to rival Abelard; but in a burning eloquence, in practical piety, in resoluteness, and in entire devotion to the great cause of the emancipation of his fellow-men from a tyranny that was oppressing both their minds and bodies, he far excelled him.

From the school of Abelard, Arnold returned to Italy - not, as one might have feared, a mystic, to spend his life in scholastic hair-splittings and wordy conflicts, but to wage an arduous and hazardous war for great and much-needed reforms. One cannot but

¹⁶Baron., *Annal.*, ann. 1147, tom. 12, col. 350, 351. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 12, chap. 4

¹⁷Baron., *Annal.*, ann. 1148, tom. 12, col. 356.

¹⁸Mosheim, cent. 12, part 2, chap. 5, sec. 8.

wish that the times had been more propitious. A frightful confusion he saw had mingled in one anomalous system the spiritual and the temporal. The clergy, from their head downwards, were engrossed in secularities. They filled the offices of State, they presided in the cabinets of princes, they led armies, they imposed taxes, they owned lordly domains, they were attended by sumptuous retinues, and they sat at luxurious tables. Here, said Arnold, is the source of a thousand evils - the Church is drowned in riches; from this immense wealth flow the corruption, the profligacy, the ignorance, the wickedness, the intrigues, the wars and bloodshed which have overwhelmed Church and State, and are ruining the world.

[52] A century earlier, Cardinal Damiani had congratulated the clergy of primitive times on the simple lives which they led, contrasting their happier lot with that of the prelates of those latter ages, who had to endure dignities which would have been but little to the taste of their first predecessors. "What would the bishops of old have done," he asked, concurring by anticipation in the censure of the eloquent Breseian, "had they to endure the torments that now attend the episcopate? To ride forth constantly attended by troops of soldiers, with swords and lances; to be girt about by armed men like a heathen general! Not amid the gentle music of hymns, but the din and clash of arms! Every day royal banquets, every day parade! The table loaded with delicacies, not for the poor, but for voluptuous guests! while the poor, to whom the property of light belongs, are shut out, and pine away with famine."

Arnold based his scheme of reform on a great principle. The Church of Christ, said he, is not of this world. This shows us that he had sat at the feet of a greater than Abelard, and had drawn his knowledge from diviner fountains than those of the scholastic philosophy. The Church of Christ is not of this world; therefore, said Arnold, its ministers ought not to fill temporal offices, and discharge temporal employments.¹⁹ Let these be left to the men whose duty it is to see to them, even kings and statesmen. Nor do the ministers of Christ need, in order to the discharge of their spiritual functions, the enormous revenues which are continually flowing into their coffers. Let all this wealth, those lands, palaces, and hoards,

¹⁹Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, vol. 12, p. 264.

be surrendered to the rulers of the State, and let the ministers of religion henceforward be maintained by the frugal yet competent provision of the tithes, and the voluntary offerings of their flocks. Set free from occupations which consume their time, degrade their office, and corrupt their heart, the clergy will lead their flocks to the pastures of the Gospel, and knowledge and piety will again revisit the earth.

Attired in his monk's cloak, his countenance stamped with courage, but already wearing traces of care, Arnold took his stand in the streets of his native Brescia, and began to thunder forth his scheme of reform.²⁰ His townsmen gathered round him. For spiritual Christianity the men of that age had little value, still Arnold had touched a chord in their hearts, to which they were able to respond. The pomp, profligacy, and power of Churchmen had scandalized all classes, and made a reformation so far welcome, even to those who were not prepared to sympathize in the more exclusively spiritual views of the Waldenses and Albigenses. The suddenness and boldness of the assault seem to have stunned the ecclesiastical authorities; and it was not till the Bishop of Brescia found his entire flock, deserting the cathedral, and assembling daily in the market-place, crowding round the eloquent preacher and listening with applause to his fierce philippics, that he bestirred himself to silence the courageous monk.

Arnold kept his course, however, and continued to launch his bolts, not against his diocesan, for to strike at one miter was not worth his while, but against that lordly hierarchy which, finding its center on the Seven Hills, had stretched its circumference to the extremities of Christendom. He demanded nothing less than that this hierarchy, which had crowned itself with temporal dignities, and which sustained itself by temporal arms, should retrace its steps, and become the lowly and purely spiritual institute it had been in the first century. It was not very likely to do so at the bidding of one man, however eloquent, but Arnold hoped to rouse the populations of Italy, and to bring such a pressure to bear upon the Vatican as would compel the chiefs of the Church to institute this most necessary and

²⁰The original picture of Arnold is by an opponent - Otho, Bishop of Frisingen (*Chron. de Gestibus, Frederici I.*, lib. 1, cap. 27, and lib. 2, cap. 21).

most just reform. Nor was he without the countenance of some persons of consequence. Maifredus, the Consul of Brescia, at the first supported his movement. ²¹

The bishop, deeming it hopeless to contend against Arnold on the spot, in the midst of his numerous followers, complained of him to the Pope. Innocent II. convoked a General Council in the Vatican, and summoned Arnold to Rome. The summons was obeyed. The crime of the monk was of all others the most heinous in the eyes of the hierarchy. He had attacked the authority, riches, and pleasures of the priesthood; but other pretexts must be found on which to condemn him. “Besides this, it was said of him that he was unsound in his judgment about the Sacrament of the altar and infant baptism.” “We find that St. Bernard sending to Pope Innocent II. a catalogue of the errors of Abelardus,” whose scholar Arnold had been, “accuseth him of teaching, concerning the Eucharist, that the accidents existed in the air, but not without a subject; and that when a rat doth eat the Sacrament, God withdraweth whither He pleaseth, and preserves where He pleases the body of Jesus Christ.” ²² The sum of this is that [53] Arnold rejected transubstantiation, and did not believe in baptismal regeneration; and on these grounds the Council found it convenient to rest their sentence, condemning him to perpetual silence.

Arnold now retired from Italy, and, passing the Alps, “he settled himself,” Otho tells us, “in a place of Germany called Turego, or Zurich, belonging to the diocese of Constance, where he continued to disseminate his doctrine,” the seeds of which, it may be presumed, continued to vegetate until the times of Zwingle.

Hearing that Innocent II. was dead, Arnold returned to Rome in the beginning of the Pontificate of Eugenius III. (1144-45). One feels surprise, bordering on astonishment, to see a man with the condemnation of a Pope and Council resting on his head, deliberately marching in at the gates of Rome, and throwing down the gage of battle to the Vatican - “the desperate measure,” as Gibbon calls it, ²³ “of erecting his standard in Rome itself, in the face of the successor of St. Peter.” But the action was not so desperate as it

²¹Otho Frisingensis, quoted by Allix, p. 171.

²²Allix, pp. 171, 174. See also summary of St. Bernard’s letters in Dupin, cent. 12, chap. 4.

²³Gibbon, Hist., vol. 12, p. 266.

looks. The Italy of those days was perhaps the least Papal of all the countries of Europe. "The Italians," says M'Crie, "could not, indeed, be said to feel at this period" (the fifteenth century, but the remark is equally applicable to the twelfth) "a superstitious devotion to the See of Rome. This did not originally form a discriminating feature of their national character; it was superinduced, and the formation of it can be distinctly traced to causes which produced their full effect subsequently to the era of the Reformation. The republics of Italy in the Middle Ages gave many proofs of religious independence, and singly braved the menaces and excommunications of the Vatican at a time when all Europe trembled at the sound of its thunder."²⁴ In truth, nowhere were sedition and tumult more common than at the gates of the Vatican; in no city did rebellion so often break out as in Rome, and no rulers were so frequently chased ignominiously from their capital as the Popes.

Arnold, in fact, found Rome on entering it in revolt. He strove to direct the agitation into a wholesome channel. He essayed, if it were possible, to revive from its ashes the flame of ancient liberty, and to restore, by cleansing it from its many corruptions, the bright form of primitive Christianity. With an eloquence worthy of the times he spoke of, he dwelt on the achievements of the heroes and patriots of classic ages, the sufferings of the first Christian martyrs, and the humble and holy lives of the first Christian bishops. Might it not be possible to bring back those glorious times? He called on the Romans to arise and unite with him in an attempt to do so. Let us drive out the buyers and sellers who have entered the Temple, let us separate between the spiritual and the temporal jurisdiction, let us give to the Pope the things of the Pope, the government of the Church even, and let us give to the emperor the things of the emperor - namely, the government of the State; let us relieve the clergy from the wealth that burdens them, and the dignities that disfigure them, and with the simplicity and virtue of former times will return the lofty characters and the heroic deeds that gave to those times their renown. Rome will become once more the capital of the world. "He propounded to the multitude," says Bishop Otho, "the examples of

²⁴M'Crie, *Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Italy*, p. 41; 2nd edit., 1833.

the ancient Romans, who by the maturity of their senators' counsels, and the valor and integrity of their youth, made the whole world their own. Wherefore he persuaded them to rebuild the Capitol, to restore the dignity of the senate, to reform the order of knights. He maintained that nothing of the government of the city did belong to the Pope, who ought to content himself only with his ecclesiastical." Thus did the monk of Brescia raise the cry for separation of the spiritual from the temporal at the very foot of the Vatican.

For about ten years (1145-55) Arnold continued to prosecute his mission in Rome. The city all that time may be said to have been in a state of insurrection. The Pontifical chair was repeatedly emptied. The Popes of that era were short-lived; their reigns were full of tumult, and their lives of care. Seldom did they reside at Rome; more frequently they lived at Viterbo, or retired to a foreign country; and when they did venture within the walls of their capital, they entrusted the safety of their persons rather to the gates and bars of their stronghold of St. Angelo than to the loyalty of their subjects. The influence of Arnold meanwhile was great, his party numerous, and had there been virtue enough among the Romans they might during these ten favorable years, when Rome was, so to speak, in their hands, have founded a movement which would have had important results for the cause of liberty and the Gospel. But Arnold strove in vain to recall a spirit that was fled for centuries. Rome was a sepulcher. Her citizens could be stirred into tumult, not awakened into life.

[54] The opportunity passed. And then came Adrian IV., Nicholas Breakspear, the only Englishman who ever ascended the throne of the Vatican. Adrian addressed himself with rigor to quell the tempests which for ten years had warred around the Papal chair. He smote the Romans with interdict. They were vanquished by the ghostly terror. They banished Arnold, and the portals of the churches, to them the gates of heaven, were re-opened to the penitent citizens. But the exile of Arnold did not suffice to appease the anger of Adrian. The Pontiff bargained with Frederic Barbarossa, who was then soliciting from the Pope coronation as emperor, that the monk should be given up. Arnold was seized, sent to Rome under a strong escort, and burned alive. We are able to infer that his followers in Rome were numerous to the last, from the reason given for the order

to throw his ashes into the Tiber, "to prevent the foolish rabble from expressing any veneration for his body."²⁵

Arnold had been burned to ashes, but the movement he had inaugurated was not extinguished by his martyrdom. The men of his times had condemned his cause; it was destined, nevertheless, seven centuries afterwards, to receive the favorable and all but unanimous verdict of Europe. Every succeeding Reformer and patriot took up his cry for a separation between the spiritual and temporal, seeing in the union of the two in the Roman principedom one cause of the corruption and tyranny which afflicted both Church and State. Wicliffe made this demand in the fourteenth century; Savonarola in the fifteenth; and the Reformers in the sixteenth. Political men in the following centuries reiterated and proclaimed, with ever-growing emphasis, the doctrine of Arnold. At last, on the 20th of September, 1870, it obtained its crowning victory. On that day the Italians entered Rome, the temporal sovereignty of the Pope came to an end, the scepter was disjoined from the miter, and the movement celebrated its triumph on the same spot where its first champion had been burned.

²⁵ Allix, p. 172. We find St. Bernard writing letters to the Bishop of Constance and the Papal legate, urging the persecution of Arnold. (See Dupin, *Life of St. Bernard*, cent. 12, chap. 4.) Mosheim has touched the history of Arnold of Breseia, but not with discriminating judgment, nor sympathetic spirit. This remark applies to his accounts of all these early confessors.

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Chapter 12: Abelard, and Rise of Modern

[56]

Skepticism

Number and Variety of Sects—One Faith—Who gave us the Bible?—Abelard of Paris—His Fame—Father of Modern Skepticism—The Parting of the Ways—Since Abelard three currents in Christendom—The Evangelical, the Ultramontane, the Skeptical

One is apt, from a cursory survey of the Christendom of those days, to conceive it as speckled with an almost endless variety of opinions and doctrines, and dotted all over with numerous and diverse religious sects. We read of the Waldenses on the south of the Alps, and the Albigenses on the north of these mountains. We are told of the Petrobrussians appearing in this year, and the Henricians rising in that. We see a company of Manicheans burned in one city, and a body of Paulicians martyred in another. We find the Peterini planting themselves in this province, and the Cathari spreading themselves over that other. We figure to ourselves as many conflicting creeds as there are rival standards; and we are on the point, perhaps, of bewailing this supposed diversity of opinion as a consequence of breaking loose from the “center of unity” in Rome. Some even of our religious historians seem haunted by the idea that each one of these many bodies is representative of a different dogma, and that dogma an error. The impression is a natural one, we own, but it is entirely erroneous. In this diversity there was a grand unity. It was substantially the same creed that was professed by all these bodies. They were all agreed in drawing their theology from the same Divine fountain. The Bible was their one infallible rule and authority. Its cardinal doctrines they embodied in their creed and exemplified in their lives.

Individuals doubtless there were among them of erroneous belief and of immoral character. It is of the general body that we speak. That body, though dispersed over many kingdoms, and known by

various names, found a common center in the "one Lord," and a common bond in the "one faith" Through one Mediator did they all offer their worship, and on one foundation did they all rest for forgiveness and the life eternal. They were in short the Church - the one Church doing over again what she did in the first ages. Overwhelmed by a second irruption of Paganism, reinforced by a flood of Gothic superstitions, she was essaying to lay her foundations anew in the truth, and to build herself up by the enlightening and renewing of souls, and to give to herself outward visibility and form by her ordinances, institutions, and assemblies, that as a universal spiritual empire she might subjugate all nations to the obedience of the evangelical law and the practice of evangelical virtue.

It is idle for Rome to say, "I gave you the Bible, and therefore you must believe in me before you can believe in it." The facts we have already narrated conclusively dispose of this claim. Rome did not give us the Bible - she did all in her power to keep it from us; she retained it under the seal of a dead language; and when others broke that seal, and threw open its pages to all, she stood over the book, and, unsheathing her fiery sword, would permit none to read the message of life, save at the peril of eternal anathema.

We owe the Bible - that is, the transmission of it - to those persecuted communities which we have so rapidly passed in review. They received it from the primitive Church, and carried it down to us. They translated it into the mother tongues of the nations. They colported it over Christendom, singing it in their lays as troubadours, preaching it in their sermons as missionaries, and living it out as Christians. They fought the battle of the Word of God against tradition, which sought to bury it. They sealed their testimony for it at the stake. But for them, so far as human agency is concerned, the Bible would, ere this day, have disappeared from the world. Their care to keep this torch burning is one of the marks which indubitably certify them as forming part of that one true Catholic Church, which God called into existence at first by His word, and which, by the same instrumentality, He has, in the conversion of souls, perpetuated from age to age.

But although under great variety of names there is found substantial identity of doctrine among these numerous bodies, it is clear that a host of new, contradictory, and most heterogeneous opinions

[57] began to spring up in the age we speak of. The opponents of the Albigenses and the Waldenses— more especially Alanus, in his little book against heretics; and Reynerius, the opponent of the Waldenses - have massed together all these discordant sentiments, and charged them upon the evangelical communities. Their controversial tracts, in which they enumerate and confute the errors of the sectaries, have this value even, that they present a picture of their times, and show us the mental fermentation that began to characterize the age. But are we to infer that the Albigenses and their allies held all the opinions which their enemies impute to them? that they at one and the same time believed that God did and did not exist; that the world had been created, and yet that it had existed from eternity; that an atonement had been made for the sin of man by Christ, and yet that the cross was a fable; that the joys of Paradise were reserved for the righteous, and yet that there was neither soul nor spirit, hell nor heaven? No. This were to impute to them an impossible creed. Did these philosophical and skeptical opinions, then, exist only in the imaginations of their accusers? No. What manifestly we are to infer is that outside the Albigensian and evangelical pale there was a large growth of sceptical and atheistical sentiment, more or less developed, and that the superstition and tyranny of the Church of Rome had even then, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, impelled the rising intellect of Christendom into a channel dangerous at once to her own power and to the existence of Christianity. Her champions, partly from lack of discrimination, partly from a desire to paint in odious colors those whom they denominated heretics, mingled in one the doctrines drawn from Scripture and the speculations and impieties of an infidel philosophy, and, compounding them into one creed, laid the monstrous thing at the door of the Albigenses, just as in our own day we have seen Popes and Popish writers include in the same category, and confound in the same condemnation, the professors of Protestantism and the disciples of Pantheism.

From the twelfth century and the times of Peter Abelard, we can discover three currents of thought in Christendom. Peter Abelard was the first and in some respects the greatest of modern skeptics. He was the first person in Christendom to attack publicly the doctrine of the Church of Rome from the side of free-thinking. His skepticism was not the avowed and fully-formed infidelity of later times: he but

sowed the seeds; he but started the mind of Europe - then just beginning to awake - on the path of doubt and of philosophic skepticism, leaving the movement to gather way in the following ages. But that he did sow the seeds which future laborers took pains to cultivate, cannot be doubted by those who weigh carefully his teachings on the head of the Trinity, of the person of Christ, of the power of the human will, of the doctrine of sin, and other subjects. ¹

And these seeds he sowed widely. He was a man of vast erudition, keen wit, and elegant rhetoric, and the novelty of his views and the fame of his genius attracted crowds of students from all countries to his lectures. Dazzled by the eloquence of their teacher, and completely captivated by the originality and subtlety of his daring genius, these scholars carried back to their homes the views of Abelard, and diffused them, from England on the one side to Sicily on the other. Had Rome possessed the infallibility she boasts, she would have foreseen to what this would grow, and provided an effectual remedy before the movement had gone beyond control.

She did indeed divine, to some extent, the true character of the principles which the renowned but unfortunate ² teacher was so freely scattering on the opening mind of Christendom. She assembled a Council, and condemned them as erroneous. But Abelard went on as before, the laurel round his brow, the thorn at his breast, propounding to yet greater crowds of scholars his peculiar opinions and doctrines. Rome has always been more lenient to sceptical than to evangelical views. And thus, whilst she burned Arnold, she permitted Abelard to die a monk and canon in her communion.

But here, in the twelfth century, at the chair of Abelard, we stand at the parting of the ways. From this time we find three great parties and three great schools of thought in Europe. First, there is the Protestant, in which we behold the Divine principle struggling to disentangle itself from Pagan and Gothic corruptions. Secondly,

¹P. Bayle, Dictionary, Historical and Critical, vol. 1, arts. Abelard, Berenger, Amboise; 2nd edit., Lond., 1734. See also Dupin, Eccl. Hist., cent. 12, chap. 4, Life of Bernard. As also Mosheim, Eccl. Hist., cent. 12, chap. 2, secs. 18, 22; chap. 3, secs. 6 - 12..995

²The moral weakness that is the frequent accompaniment of philosophic scepticism has very often been remarked. The case of Abelard was no exception. What a melancholy interest invests his story, as related by Bayle!

[58] there is the Superstitious, which had now come to make all doctrine to consist in a belief of “the Church’s” inspiration, and all duty in an obedience to her authority. And thirdly, there is the Intellectual, which was just the reason of man endeavoring to shake off the trammels of Roman authority, and go forth and expatiate in the fields of free inquiry. It did right to assert this freedom, but, unhappily, it altogether ignored the existence of the spiritual faculty in man, by which the things of the spiritual world are to be apprehended, and by which the intellect itself has often to be controlled. Nevertheless, this movement, of which Peter Abelard was the pioneer, went on deepening and widening its current century after century, till at last it grew to be strong enough to change the face of kingdoms, and to threaten the existence not only of the Roman Church,³ but of Christianity itself.

³Lord Macaulay, in his essay on the Church of Rome, has characterized the Waldensian and Albigensian movements as the revolt of the human intellect against Catholicism. We would apply that epithet rather to the great scholastic and pantheistic movement which Abelard inaugurated; that was the revolt of the intellect strictly viewed. The other was the revolt of the conscience quickened by the Spirit of God. It was the revival of the Divine principle.

Book 2: Wicliffe and his Times, or Advent of Protestantism

Chapter 1: Wicliffe - His Birth and Education

The Principle and the Rite—Rapid Growth of the One—Slow Progress and ultimate Triumph of the Other—England—Wicliffe—His Birthplace—His Education—Goes to Oxford—Enters Merton College—Its Fame—The Evangelical Bradwardine—His Renown—Pioneers the Way for Wicliffe—The Philosophy of those Days—Wicliffe's Eminence as a Scholastic—Studies also the Canon and Civil Laws—His Conversion—Theological Studies—The Black Death—Ravages Greece, Italy, etc—Enters England—Its awful Desolations—Its Impression on Wicliffe—Stands Face to Face with Eternal Death—Taught not to Fear the Death of the Body

Picture: Tomb of Abelard

Picture: John Wicliffe

With the revolving centuries we behold the world slowly emerging into the light. The fifth century brought with it a signal blessing to Christianity in the guise of a disaster. Like a tree that was growing too rapidly, it was cut down to its roots that it might escape a luxuriance which would have been its ruin. From a Principle that has its seat in the heart, and the fruit of which is an enlightened understanding and a holy life, Religion, under the corrupting influences of power and riches, was being transformed into a Rite, which, having its sphere solely in the senses, leaves the soul in darkness and the life in bondage.

These two, the Principle and the Rite, began so early as the fourth and fifth centuries to draw apart, and to develop each after its own kind. The rite rapidly progressed, and seemed far to outstrip its rival. It built for itself gorgeous temples, it enlisted in its service a powerful hierarchy, it added year by year to the number and magnificence of its ceremonies, it expressed itself in canons and constitutions; and, seduced by this imposing show, nations bowed down before it, and puissant kings lent their swords for its defense and propagation.

Far otherwise was it with its rival. Withdrawing into the spiritual sphere, it appeared to have abandoned the field to its antagonist. Not so, however. If it had hidden itself from the eyes of men, it was that it might build up from the very foundation, piling truth upon truth, and prepare in silence those mighty spiritual forces by which it was in due time to emancipate the world. Its progress was consequently less marked, but was far more real than that of its antagonist. Every error which the one pressed into its service was a cause of weakness; every truth which the other added to its creed was a source of strength. The uninstructed and superstitious hordes which the one received into its communion were dangerous allies. They might follow it in the day of its prosperity, but they would desert it and become its foes whenever the tide of popular favor turned against it. Not so the adherents of the other. With purified hearts and enlightened understandings, they were prepared to follow it at all hazards. The number of its disciples, small at first, continually multiplied. The purity of their lives, the meekness with which they bore the injuries inflicted on them, and the heroism with which their death was endured, augmented from age to age the moral power and the spiritual glory of their cause. And thus, while the one reached its fall through its very success, the other marched on through oppression and proscription to triumph. [59]

We have arrived at the beginning of the fourteenth century. We have had no occasion hitherto to speak of the British Isles, but now our attention must be turned to them. Here a greater light is about to appear than any that had illumined the darkness of the ages that had gone before.

In the North Riding of Yorkshire, watered by the Tees, lies the parish of Wicliffe. In the manor-house of this parish, in the year 1324, ¹ was born a child, who was named John. Here his ancestors had lived since the time of the Conquest, and according to the manner of the times, they took their surname from the place of their residence, and the son now born to them was known as John de Wicliffe. Of his boyhood nothing is recorded. He was destined from an early age for the Church, which gives us ground to conclude that even then he discovered that penetrating intelligence which marked

¹Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 1; Oxford ed., 1820.

his maturer years, and that loving sympathy which drew him so often in after life to the homesteads and the sick-beds of his parish of Lutterworth. Schools for rudimental instruction were even then pretty thickly planted over England, in connection with the cathedral towns and the religious houses; and it is probable that the young Wicliffe received his first training at one of these seminaries in his own neighborhood. ²

At the age of sixteen or thereabouts, Wicliffe was sent to Oxford. Here he became first a scholar, and next a fellow of Merton College, the oldest foundation save one in Oxford. ³ The youth of England, athirst for knowledge, the fountains of which had long been sealed up, were then crowding to the universities, and when Wicliffe entered Merton there were not fewer than 30,000 students at Oxford. These numbers awaken surprise, but it is to be taken into account that many of the halls were no better than upper schools. The college which Wicliffe joined was the most distinguished at that seat of learning. The fame, unrivaled in their own day, which two of its scholars, William Occam and Duns Scotus, had attained, shed a luster upon it. One of its chairs had been filled by the celebrated Bradwardine, ⁴ who was closing his career at Merton about the time that the young Wicliffe was opening his in Oxford. Bradwardine was one of the first mathematicians and astronomers of his day; but having been drawn to the study of the Word of God, he embraced the doctrines of free grace, and his chair became a fountain of higher knowledge than that of natural science. While most of his contemporaries, by the aid of a subtle scholasticism, were endeavoring to penetrate into the essence of things, and to explain all mysteries, Bradwardine was content to accept what God had revealed in His Word, and this humility was rewarded by his finding the path which others missed. Lifting the veil, he unfolded to his students, who crowded round

²Lechler thinks that "probably it was the pastor of the same-named village who was his first teacher." (Johann von Wiclif, und die Vorgeschichte der Reformation, vol. 1, p. 271; Leipzig, 1873.)

³Of the twenty and more colleges that now constitute Oxford University, only five then existed, viz. - Merton (1274), Balliol (1260 - 82), Exeter (1314), Oriel (1324), and University College (1332). These foundations were originally intended for the support of poor scholars, who were under the rule of a superior, and received both board and instruction.

⁴Lewis, Life of Wiclif, p. 2.

him with eager attention and admiring reverence, the way of life, warning them especially against that Pelagianism which was rapidly substituting a worship of externals for a religion of the heart, and teaching men to trust in their power of will for a salvation which can come only from the sovereign grace of God. Bradwardine was greater as a theologian than he had been as a philosopher. The fame of his lectures filled Europe, and his evangelical views, diffused by his scholars, helped to prepare the way for Wicliffe and others who were to come after him. It was around his chair that the new day was seen first to break.

A quick apprehension, a penetrating intellect, and a retentive memory, enabled the young scholar of Merton to make rapid progress in the learning of those days. Philosophy then lay in guesses rather than in facts. Whatever could be known from having been put before man in the facts of Nature or the doctrines of Revelation, was deemed not worth further investigation. It was too humble an occupation to observe and to deduce. In the pride of his genius, man turned away from a field lying at his feet, and plunged boldly into a region where, having no data to guide him and no ground for solid footing, he could learn really nothing. From this region of vague speculation the explorer brought back only the images of his own creating, and, dressing up these fancies as facts, he passed them off as knowledge.

Such was the philosophy that invited the study of Wicliffe.⁵ [60] There was scarce enough in it to reward his labor, but he thirsted for knowledge, and giving himself to it “with his might,” he soon became a master in the scholastic philosophy, and did not fear to encounter the subtlest of all the subtle disputants in the schools of Oxford. He was “famously reputed,” says Fox, “for a great clerk, a deep schoolman, and no less expert in all kinds of philosophy.” Walden, his bitter enemy, writing to Pope Martin V. respecting him,

⁵The study of the *artes liberales*, from which the Faculty of Arts takes its name were, first, Trivium, comprehending grammar, dialectics, and rhetoric; then Quadrivium, comprehending arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. It was not uncommon to study ten years at the university - four in the Faculty of Arts, and seven, or at least five, in theology. If Wicliffe entered the university in 1335, he probably ended his studies in 1345. He became successively Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and, after an interval of several years, Bachelor of Theology, or as they then expressed it, *Sacra Pagina*.

says that he was “wonderfully astonished” at the “vehemency and force of his reasonings,” and the “places of authority” with which they were fortified. ⁶ To his knowledge of scholastics he added great proficiency in both the canon and civil laws. This was a branch of knowledge which stood him in more stead in after years than the other and more fashionable science. By these studies he became versed in the constitution and laws of his native country, and was fitted for taking an intelligent part in the battle which soon thereafter arose between the usurpations of the Pontiff and the rights of the crown of England. “He had an eye for the most different things,” says Lechler, speaking of Wicliffe, “and took a lively interest in the most multifarious questions.” ⁷

[61] But the foundation of Wicliffe’s greatness was laid in a higher teaching than any that man can give. It was the illumination of his mind and the renewal of his heart by the instrumentality of the Bible that made him the Reformer - certainly, the greatest of all the Reformers who appeared before the era of Luther. Without this, he might have been remembered as an eminent scholastic of the fourteenth century, whose fame has been luminous enough to transmit a few feeble rays to our own age; but he never would have been known as the first to bear the axe into the wilderness of Papal abuses, and to strike at the roots of that great tree of which others had been content to lop off a few of the branches. The honour would not have been his to be the first to raise that Great Protest, which nations will bear onwards till it shall have made the circuit of the earth, proclaiming, “Fallen is every idol, razed is every stronghold of darkness and tyranny, and now is come salvation, and the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever.”

How Wicliffe came to a knowledge of the truth it is not difficult to guess. He was, D’Aubigne informs us, one of the scholars of the evangelical Bradwardine. ⁸ As he heard the great master discourse day by day on the sovereignty of grace and the freeness of salvation, a new light would begin to break upon the mind of the young scholastic. He would turn to a diviner page than that of Plato. But for this Wicliffe might have entered the priesthood without ever hav-

⁶Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 554; Lond., 1641.

⁷Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 1, p. 726.

⁸D’Aubigne, *Hist. of Reform.*, vol. 5, p. 110.

ing studied a single chapter of the Bible, for instruction in theology formed no part of preparation for the sacred office in those days.

No doubt theology, after a fashion, was studied, yet not a theology whose substance was drawn from the Bible, but a man-invented system. The Bachelors of Theology of the lowest grade held readings in the Bible. Not so, however, the Bachelors of the middle and highest grades: these founded their prelections upon the Sentences of Peter Lombard. Puffed up with the conceit of their mystical lore, they regarded it beneath their dignity to expound so elementary a book as the Holy Scriptures. The former were named contemptuously *Biblicists*; the latter were honorably designated *Sententiarii*, or *Men of the Sentences*.⁹

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“There was no mention,” says Fox, describing the early days of Wicliffe, “nor almost any word spoken of Scripture. Instead of Peter and Paul, men occupied their time in studying Aquinas and Scotus, and the Master of Sentences.” “Scarcely any other thing was seen in the temples or churches, or taught or spoken of in sermons, or finally intended or gone about in their whole life, but only heaping up of certain shadowed ceremonies upon ceremonies; neither was there any end of their heaping. The people were taught to worship no other thing but that which they did see, and they did see almost nothing which they did not worship.”¹⁰ In the midst of these groveling superstitions, men were startled by the approach of a terrible visitant. The year 1348 was fatally signalled by the outbreak of a fearful pestilence, one of the most destructive in history. Appearing first in Asia, it took a westerly course, traversing the globe like the pale horse and his rider in the Apocalypse, terror marching before it, and death following in its rear. It ravaged the Shores of the Levant, it desolated Greece, and going on still toward the west, it struck Italy with terrible severity. Florence, the lovely capital of Etruria, it turned into a charnel-house. The genius of Boccaccio painted its horrors, and the muse of Petrarch bewailed its desolations. The latter had cause, for Laura was among its victims. Passing the Alps it entered

⁹Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif, und die Vorgeschichte der Reformation*, vol. 1, p. 284; Leipzig, 1873.

¹⁰Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 555. After the Sentences of Peter Lombard, in the study of theology, came the patristic and scholastic divines, and especially the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas.

Northern Europe, leaving, say some contemporary historians, only a tenth of the human race alive. This we know is an exaggeration; but it expresses the popular impression, and sufficiently indicates the awful character of those ravages, in which all men heard, as it were, the footsteps of coming death. The sea as well as the land was marked with its devastating prints. Ships voyaging afar on the ocean were overtaken by it, and when the winds piloted them to land, they were found to be freighted with none but the dead.

On the 1st of August the plague touched the shores of England. "Beginning at Dorchester," says Fox, "every day twenty, some days forty, some fifty, and more, dead corpses, were brought and laid together in one deep pit." On the 1st day of November it reached London, "where," says the same chronicler, "the vehement rage thereof was so hot, and did increase so much, that from the 1st day of February till about the beginning of May, in a church-yard then newly made by Smithfield [Charterhouse], about two hundred dead corpses every day were buried, besides those which in other church-yards of the city were laid also." ¹¹

"In those days," says another old chronicler, Caxton, "was death without sorrow, weddings without friendship, flying without succour; scarcely were there left living folk for to bury honestly them that were dead." Of the citizens of London not fewer than 100,000 perished. The ravages of the plague were spread over all England, and a full half of the nation was struck down. From men the pestilence passed to the lower animals. Putrid carcasses covered the fields; the labours of the husbandman were suspended; the soil ceased to be ploughed, and the harvest to be reaped; the courts of law were closed, and Parliament did not meet; everywhere reigned terror, mourning, and death.

This dispensation was the harbinger of a very different one. The tempest that scathed the earth opened the way for the shower which was to fertilize it. The plague was not without its influence on that great movement which, beginning with Wicliffe, was continued in a line of confessors and martyrs, till it issued in the Reformation of Luther and Calvin. Wicliffe had been a witness of the passage of the destroyer; he had seen the human race fading from off the earth

¹¹Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 507.

as if the ages had completed their cycle, and the end of the world was at hand. He was then in his twenty-fifth year, and could not but be deeply impressed by the awful events passing around him. "This visitation of the Almighty," says D'Aubigne, "sounded like the trumpet of the judgment-day in the heart of Wicliffe."¹² Bradwardine had already brought him to the Bible, the plague brought him to it a second time; and now, doubtless, he searched its page more earnestly than ever. He came to it, not as the theologian, seeking in it a deeper wisdom than any mystery which the scholastic philosophy could open to him; nor as the scholar, to refine his taste by its pure models, and enrich his understanding by the sublimity of its doctrines; nor even as the polemic, in search of weapons wherewith, to assail the dominant superstitions; he now came to the Bible as a lost sinner, seeking how he might be saved. Nearer every day came the messenger of the Almighty. The shadow that messenger cast before him was hourly deepening; and we can hear the young student, who doubtless in that hour felt the barrenness and insufficiency of the philosophy of the schools, lifting up with increasing vehemency the cry, "Who shall deliver me from the wrath to come?"

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It would seem to be a law that all who are to be reformers of their age shall first undergo a conflict of soul. They must feel in their own ease the strength of error, the bitterness of the bondage in which it holds men, and stand face to face with the Omnipotent Judge, before they can become the deliverers of others. This only can inspire them with pity for the wretched captives whose fetters they seek to break, and give them courage to brave the oppressors from whose cruelty they labor to rescue them. This agony of soul did Luther and Calvin undergo; and a distress and torment similar in character, though perhaps not so great in degree, did Wicliffe endure before beginning his work. His sins, doubtless, were made a heavy burden to him - so heavy that he could not lift up his head. Standing on the brink of the pit, he says, he felt how awful it was to go down into the eternal night, "and inhabit everlasting burnings." The joy of escape from a doom so terrible made him feel how small a matter is the life of the body, and how little to be regarded are the torments which the tyrants of earth have it in their power to inflict, compared

¹²D'Aubigne, *Hist. of Reform.*, vol. 5, p. 110.

with the wrath of the Ever-living God. It is in these fires that the reformers have been hardened. It is in this school that they have learned to defy death and to sing at the stake. In this armor was Wicliffe clad before he was sent forth into the battle.

Chapter 2: Wicliffe, and the Pope's Encroachments on England

Personal Appearance of Wicliffe—His Academic Career—Bachelor of Theology—Lectures on the Bible—England Quarrels with the Pope—Wicliffe Defends the King's Prerogative—Innocent III—The Pope Appoints to the See of Canterbury—King John Resists—England Smitten with Interdict—Terrors of the Sentence—The Pope Deposes the King—Invites the French King to Conquer England—John becomes the Pope's Vassal—The Barons extort Magna Charta—The Pope Excommunicates the Barons—Annuls the Charter—The Courage of the Barons Saves England—Demand of Urban V—Growth of England—National Opposition to Papal Usurpations—Papal Abuses—Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire

Picture: Canterbury Cathedral from the East End

Picture: King John and the Pope's Legate

Of the merely personal incidents of Wicliffe's life almost nothing is recorded. The services done for his own times, and for the ages that were to follow, occupy his historians to the exclusion of all strictly personal matters. Few have acted so large a part, and filled so conspicuous a place in the eyes of the world, of whom so few private reminiscences and details have been preserved. The charm of a singular sweetness, and the grace of a rare humility and modesty, appear to have characterized him. These qualities were blended with a fine dignity, which he wore easily, as those nobly born do the insignia of their rank. Not blameless merely, but holy, was the life he lived in an age of unexampled degeneracy. "From his portrait," says the younger M'Crie, "which has been preserved, some idea may be formed of the personal appearance of the man. He must have been a person of noble aspect and commanding attitude. The dark piercing eye, the aquiline features, and firm-set lips, with the sarcastic smile

that mantles over them, exactly agree with all we know of the bold and unsparing character of the Reformer.”¹

A few sentences will suffice to trace the various stages of Wicliffe’s academic career. He passed twenty years at Merton College, Oxford - first as a scholar and next as a fellow. In 1360 he was appointed to the Mastership of Balliol College. This preferment he owed to the fame he had acquired as a scholastic.²

[64] Having become a Bachelor of Theology, Wicliffe had now the privilege of giving public lectures in the university on the Books of Scripture. He was forbidden to enter the higher field of the *Sentences* of Peter of Lombardy - if, indeed, he was desirous of doing so. This belonged exclusively to the higher grade of Bachelors and Doctors in Theology. But the expositions he now gave of the Books of Holy Writ proved of great use to himself. He became more profoundly versed in the knowledge of divine things; and thus was the professor unwittingly prepared for the great work of reforming the Church, to which the labours of his after-life were to be directed.³

He was soon thereafter appointed (1365) to be head of Canterbury Hall. This was a new college, founded by Simon de Islip,⁴ Archbishop of Canterbury. The constitution of this college ordained that its fellowships should be held by four monks and eight secular priests. The rivalry existing between the two orders was speedily productive of broils, and finally led to a conflict with the university authorities; and the founder, finding the plan unworkable, dismissed the four monks, replaced them with seculars, and appointed Wicliffe as Master or Warden. Within a year Islip died, and was succeeded in the primacy by Langham, who, himself a monk, restored the expelled regulars, and, displacing Wicliffe from his Wardenship, appointed a new head to the college. Wicliffe then appealed to the

¹Thomas M’Crie, D.D., LL.D., *Annals of English Presbytery*, p. 36; Lond., 1872.

²Lechler, 1. 137.

³Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 10; Oxford, 1820. Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 1, pp. 268 - 270.

⁴This primate was a good man, but not exempt from the superstition of his age. Fox tells us that he presented one of his churches with the original vestments in which St. Peter was supposed to have celebrated mass! Their sanctity, doubtless, had defended these venerable robes from the moths!

Pope; but Langham had the greater influence at Rome, and after a long delay, in 1370, the cause was given against Wicliffe.⁵

It was pending this decision that events happened which opened to Wicliffe a wider arena than the halls of Oxford. Henceforth, it was not against the monks of Canterbury Hall, or even the Primate of England - it was against the Prince Pontiff of Christendom that Wicliffe was to do battle. In order to understand what we are now to relate, we must go back a century.

The throne of England was then filled by King John, a vicious, pusillanimous, and despotic monarch, but nevertheless capable by fits and starts of daring and brave deeds. In 1205, Hubert, the Primate of England, died. The junior canons of Canterbury met clandestinely that very night, and without any *conge d'elire*, elected Reginald, their sub-prior, Archbishop of Canterbury, and installed him in the archiepiscopal throne before midnight.⁶ By the next dawn Reginald was on his way to Rome, whither he had been dispatched by his brethren to solicit the Pope's confirmation of his election. When the king came to the knowledge of the transaction, he was enraged at its temerity, and set about procuring the election of the Bishop of Norwich to the primacy. Both parties - the king and the canons - sent agents to Rome to plead their cause before the Pope.

The man who then filled the chair of Peter, Innocent III., was vigorously prosecuting the audacious project of Gregory VII., of subordinating the rights and power of princes to the Papal See, and of taking into his own hands the appointment to all the episcopal sees of Christendom, that through the bishops and priests, now reduced to an absolute monarchy entirely dependent upon the Vatican, he might govern at his will all the kingdoms of Europe. No Pope ever was more successful in this ambitious policy than the man before whom the King of England on the one hand, and the canons of Canterbury on the other, now carried their cause. Innocent annulled both elections - that of the canons and that of the king - and made his own nominee, Cardinal Langton, be chosen to the See of Canterbury.

⁵Lechler, Johann von Wiclif, vol. 1, p. 293. Lewis, Life of Wiclif, p. 17. Vaughan, Life of John de Wicliffe, vol. 1, p. 301.

⁶Gabriel d'Emillianne, Hist. of Monast. Orders, Preface; Lond., 1693. Hume, Hist. of England, vol. 1, chap. 11, p. 185; Lond., 1826. Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 325; Lond., 1641.

⁷ But this was not all. The king had appealed to the Pope; and Innocent saw in this a precedent, not to be let slip, for putting in the gift of the Pontiff in all time coming what, after the Papal throne, was the most important dignity in the Roman Church.

[65] John could not but see the danger, and feel the humiliation implied in the step taken by Innocent. The See of Canterbury was the first seat of dignity and jurisdiction in England, the throne excepted. A foreign power had appointed one to fill that august seat. In an age in which the ecclesiastical was a more formidable authority than the temporal, this was an alarming encroachment on the royal prerogative and the nation's independence. Why should the Pope be content to appoint to the See of Canterbury? Why should he not also appoint to the throne, the one other seat in the realm that rose above it? The king protested with many oaths that the Pope's nominee should never sit in the archiepiscopal chair. He waxed bold for the moment, and began the battle as if he meant to win it. He turned the canons of Canterbury out of doors, ordered all the prelates and abbots to leave the kingdom, and bade defiance to the Pope. It was not difficult to foresee what would be the end of a conflict carried on by the weakest of England's monarchs, against the haughtiest and most powerful of Rome's Popes. The Pontiff smote England with interdict; ⁸ the king had offended, and the whole nation must be punished along with him. Before we can realize the terrors of such a sentence, we must forget all that the past three centuries have taught us, and surrender our imaginations to the superstitious beliefs which armed the interdict with its tremendous power.

The men of those times, on whom this doom fell, saw the gates of heaven locked by the strong hand of the Pontiff, so that none might enter who came from the unhappy realm lying under the Papal ban. All who departed this life must wander forlorn as disembodied ghosts in some doleful region, amid unknown sufferings, till it should please him who carried the keys to open the closed gates. As the earthly picture of this spiritual doom, all the symbols of grace and all the ordinances of religion were suspended. The church-doors were closed; the lights at the altar were extinguished; the bells ceased to

⁷Gabriel d'Emillianne, *Hist. of Monast. Orders*, Preface. Hume, *Hist. of Eng.*, Reign of King John.

⁸Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 327. Hume, *Hist. of Eng.*, p. 186.

be rung; the crosses and images were taken down and laid on the ground; infants were baptized in the church-porch; marriages were celebrated in the church-yard; the dead were buried in ditches or in the open fields. No one durst rejoice, or eat flesh, or shave his beard, or pay any decent attention to his person or apparel. It was meet that only signs of distress and mourning and woe should be visible throughout a land over which there rested the wrath of the Almighty; for so did men account the ban of the Pontiff.

King John braved this state of matters for two whole years. But Pope Innocent was not to be turned from his purpose; he resolved to visit and bow the obstinacy of the monarch by a yet more terrible infliction. He pronounced sentence of excommunication upon John, deposing him from his throne, and absolving his subjects from allegiance. To carry out this sentence it needed an armed force, and Innocent, casting his eyes around him, fixed on Philip Augustus, King of France, as the most suitable person to deal the blow on John, offering him the Kingdom of England for his pains. It was not the interest of Philip to undertake such an enterprise, for the same boundless and uncontrollable power which was tumbling the King of England from his throne might the next day, on some ghostly pretense or other, hurl King Philip Augustus from his. But the prize was a tempting one, and the monarch of France, collecting a mighty armament, prepared to cross the Channel and invade England.⁹

When King John saw the brink on which he stood, his courage or obstinacy forsook him. He craved an interview with Pandulf, the Pope's legate, and after a short conference, he promised to submit himself unreservedly to the Papal See. Besides engaging to make full restitution to the clergy for the losses they had suffered, he "resigned England and Ireland to God, to St. Peter, and St. Paul, and to Pope Innocent, and to his successors in the apostolic chair; he agreed to hold these dominions as feudatory of the Church of Rome by the annual payment of a thousand marks; and he stipulated that if he or his successors should ever presume to revoke or infringe this charter, they should instantly, except upon admonition they repented of their offense, forfeit all right to their dominions." The transaction was finished by the king doing homage to Pandulf, as the Pope's legate,

⁹Hume. *Hist. of Eng., Reign of King John*, chap. 11, p.189.

with all the submissive rites which the feudal law required of vassals before their liege lord and superior. Taking off his crown, it is said, John laid it on the ground; and the legate, to show the mightiness of his master, spurning it with his foot, kicked it about like a worthless bauble; and then, picking it out of the dust, placed it on the craven head of the monarch. This transaction took place on the 15th May, 1213. There is no moment of profounder humiliation than this in the annals of England. ¹⁰

[66] But the barons were resolved not to be the slaves of a Pope; their intrepidity and patriotism wiped off the ineffable disgrace which the baseness of the monarch had inflicted on the country. Unsheathing their swords, they vowed to maintain the ancient liberties of England, or die in the attempt. Appearing before the king at Oxford, April, 1215, "here," said they, "is the charter which consecrates the liberties confirmed by Henry II., and which you also have solemnly sworn to observe." The king stormed. "I will not," said he, "grant you liberties which would make me a slave." John forgot that he had already become a slave. But the barons were not to be daunted by haughty words which the king had no power to maintain: he was odious to the whole nation; and on the 15th of June, 1215, John signed the Magna Charta at Runnymede. ¹¹ This was in effect to tell Innocent that he revoked his vow of vassalage, and took back the kingdom which he had laid at his feet.

When tidings were carried to Rome of what John had done, the ire of Innocent III. was kindled to the uttermost. That he, the vicar of God, who held all the crowns of Christendom in his hand, and stood with his foot planted upon all its kingdoms, should be so affronted and so defied, was not to be borne! Was he not the feudal lord of the kingdom? was not England rightfully his? had it not been laid at his feet by a deed and covenant solemnly ratified? Who were these wretched barons, that they should withstand the Pontifical will, and place the independence of their country above the glory of the Church? Innocent instantly launched an anathema against these impious and rebellious men, at the same time inhibiting the king

¹⁰Ibid. Fox, Acts and Mon., vol 1, p. 329.

¹¹Hume, Hist. of Eng., chap. 11, p. 194. Cobbett, Parliament. Hist. of Eng., p. 9; Lond., 1806.

from carrying out the provisions of the Charter which he had signed, or in any way fulfilling its stipulations. ¹²

But Innocent went still farther. In the exercise of that singular prescience which belongs to that system by which this truculent holder of the tiara was so thoroughly inspired, and of which he was so perfect an embodiment, he divined the true nature of the transaction at Runnymede. Magna Charta was a great political protest against himself and his system. It inaugurated an order of political ideas, and a class of political rights, entirely antagonistic to the fundamental principles and claims of the Papacy. Magna Charta was constitutional liberty standing up before the face of the Papal absolutism, and throwing down the gage of battle to it. Innocent felt that he must grapple now with this hateful and monstrous birth, and strangle it in its cradle; otherwise, should he wait till it was grown, it might be too strong for him to crush. Already it had reft away from him one of the fairest of those realms which he had made dependent upon the tiara; its assaults on the Papal prerogative would not end here; he must trample it down before its insolence had grown by success, and other kingdoms and their rulers, inoculated with the impiety of these audacious barons, had begun to imitate their example. Accordingly, fulminating a bull from the plenitude of his apostolic power, and from the authority of his commission, as set by God over the kingdoms "to pluck up and destroy, to build and to plant," he annulled and abrogated the Charter, declaring all its obligations and guarantees void. ¹³

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In the signing of the Great Charter we see a new force coming into the field, to make war against that tyranny which first corrupted the souls of men before it enslaved their bodies. The divine or evangelic element came first, political liberty came after. The former is the true nurse of the latter; for in no country can liberty endure and ripen its fruits where it has not had its beginning in the moral part of man. Innocent was already contending against the evangelical principle in the crusades against the Albigenses in the south of France, and now there appeared, among the hardy nations of the North, another antagonist, the product of the first, that had come

¹²Hume, *Hist. of Eng.*, vol. 1., p. 196.

¹³Hume, *Hist. of Eng.*, vol; 1, p. 196.

to strengthen the battle against a Power, which from its seat on the Seven Hills was absorbing all rights and enslaving all nations.

The bold attitude of the barons saved the independence of the nation. Innocent went to the grave; feebler men succeeded him in the Pontifical chair; the Kings of England mounted the throne without taking the oath of fealty to the Pope, although they continued to transmit, year by year, the thousand marks which John had agreed to pay into the Papal treasury. At last, in the reign of Edward II., this annual payment was quietly dropped. No remonstrance against its discontinuance came from Rome.

But in 1365, after the payment of the thousand marks had been intermitted for thirty-five years, it was suddenly demanded by Pope Urban V. The demand was accompanied with an intimation that should the king, Edward III., fail to make payment, not only of the annual tribute, but of all arrears, he would be summoned to Rome to answer before his liege lord, the Pope, for contumacy. This was in effect to say to England, "Prostrate yourself a second time before the Pontifical chair." The England of Edward III. was not the England of King John; and this demand, as unexpected as it was insulting, stirred the nation to its depths. During the century which had elapsed since the Great Charter was signed, England's growth in all the elements of greatness had been marvelously rapid. She had fused Norman and Saxon into one people; she had formed her language; she had extended her commerce; she had reformed her laws; she had founded seats of learning, which had already become renowned; she had fought great battles and won brilliant victories; her valor was felt and her power feared by the Continental nations; and when this summons to do homage as a vassal of the Pope was heard, the nation hardly knew whether to meet it with indignation or with derision.

What made the folly of Urban in making such a demand the more conspicuous, was the fact that the political battle against the Papacy had been gradually strengthening since the era of Magna Charta. Several stringent Acts had been passed with the view of vindicating the majesty of the law, and of guarding the property of the nation and the liberties of the subject against the persistent and ambitious encroachments of Rome. Nor were these Acts unneeded. Swarm after swarm of aliens, chiefly Italians, had invaded the kingdom,

and were devouring its substance and subverting its laws. Foreign ecclesiastics were nominated by the Pope to rich livings in England; and, although they neither resided in the country nor performed any duty in it, they received the revenues of their English livings, and expended them abroad. For instance, in the sixteenth year of Edward III., two Italian cardinals were named to two vacancies in the dioceses of Canterbury and York, worth annually 2,000 marks. "The first fruits and reservations of the Pope," said the men of those times, "are more hurtful to the realm than all the king's wars."¹⁴ In a Parliament held in London in 1246, we find it complained of, among other grievances, that "the Pope, not content with Peter's pence, oppressed the kingdom by extorting from the clergy great contributions without the king's consent; that the English were forced to prosecute their rights out of the kingdom, against the customs and written laws thereof; that oaths, statutes, and privileges were enervated; and that in the parishes where the Italians were beneficed, there were no alms, no hospitality, no preaching, no divine service, no care of souls, nor any reparations done to the parsonage houses."¹⁵

[68]

A worldly dominion cannot stand without revenues. The ambition and the theology of Rome went hand in hand, and supported one another. Not an article was there in her creed, not a ceremony in her worship, not a department in her government, that did not tend to advance her power and increase her gain. Her dogmas, rites, and orders were so many pretexts for exacting money. Images, purgatory, relics, pilgrimages, indulgences, jubilees, canonisations, miracles, masses, were but taxes under another name. Tithes, annats, investitures, appeals, reservations, expectatives, bulls, and briefs were so many drains for conveying the substance of the nations of Christendom to Rome. Every new saint cost the country of his birth 100,000 crowns. A consecrated pall for an English archbishop was bought for £1,200. In the year 1250, Walter Gray, Archbishop of York, paid £10,000 for that mystic ornament, without which he might not presume to call councils, make chrism, dedicate churches, or ordain bishops and clerks. According to the present value of money, the price of this trifle may amount to £100,000. With good reason might the

¹⁴Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 551.

¹⁵Cobbett, *Parl. Hist. Eng.*, vol. 1, cols. 22, 23; Lond., 1806.

Carmelite, Baptista Mantuan, say, "If Rome gives anything, it is trifles only. She takes your gold, but gives nothing more solid in return than words. Alas! Rome is governed only by money."¹⁶

These and similar usurpations were rapidly converting the English soil into an Italian glebe. The land was tilled that it might feed foreign monks, and Englishmen were becoming hewers of wood and drawers of water to the Roman hierarchy. If the cardinals of Rome must have sumptuous banquets, and purple robes, and other and more questionable delights, it is not we, said the English people, that ought, to be fleeced to furnish these things; we demand that a stop be put to this ruinous game before we are utterly beggared by it.¹⁷ To remedy these grievances, now become intolerable, a series of enactments were passed by Parliament. In the twentieth year of Edward's reign, all alien monks were ordered to depart the kingdom by Michaelmas, and their livings were given to English scholars.¹⁸

By another Act, the revenues of all livings held by foreign ecclesiastics, cardinals, and others, were given to the king during their lives.¹⁹ It was further enacted - and the statute shows the extraordinary length to which the abuse had gone - "that all such alien enemies as be advanced to livings here in England (being in their own country shoemakers, tailors, or chamberlains to cardinals) should depart before Michaelmas, and their livings be disposed to poor English scholars."²⁰ The payment of the 2,000 marks to the two cardinals already mentioned was stopped. It was "enacted further, that no Englishman should bring into the realm, to any bishop, or other, any bull, or any other letters from Rome, or any alien, unless he show the same to the Chancellor or Warden of the Cinque Ports, upon loss of all he hath."²¹ One person, not having the fear of this statute before his eyes, ventured to bring a Papal bull into England; but he had nearly paid the forfeit of his life for his rashness; he was

¹⁶"Si quid Roma dabit, nugas dabit, accipit aurum, Verba dat, heu! Romae nunc sola pecunia regnat."

¹⁷Hume, *Hist. of Eng., Reign of Edw. III.*, chap. 16.

¹⁸Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 551.

¹⁹Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 551.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

condemned to the gallows, and would have been hanged but for the intercession of the Chancellor. ²²

We can hardly wonder at the popular indignation against these abuses, when we think of the host of evils they brought in their train. The power of the king was weakened, the jurisdiction of the tribunals was invaded, and the exchequer was impoverished. It was computed that the tax paid to the Pope for ecclesiastical dignities was five-fold that paid to the king from the whole realm. ²³ And, further, as the consequence of this transportation to other countries of the treasure of the nation, learning and the arts were discouraged, hospitals were falling into decay, the churches were becoming dilapidated, public worship was neglected, the lands were falling out of tillage, and to this cause the Parliament attributed the frequent famines and plagues that had of late visited the country, and which had resulted in a partial depopulation of England.

Two statutes in particular were passed during this period to set bounds to the Papal usurpations; these were the well-known and famous statutes of Provisors and Praemunire. The first declared it illegal to procure any presentations to any benefice from the Court of Rome, or to accept any living otherwise than as the law directed through the chapters and ordinary electors. All such appointments were to be void, the parties concerned in them were to be punished with fine and imprisonment, and no appeal was allowed beyond the king's court. The second statute, which came three years afterwards, forbade all appeals on questions of property from the English tribunals to the courts at Rome, under pain of confiscation of goods and imprisonment during the king's pleasure. ²⁴ Such appeals had become very common, but a stop was now put to them by the vigorous application of the statute; but the law against foreign nominations to benefices it was not so easy to enforce, and the enactment, although it abated, did not abolish the abuse.

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²²D'Aubigne, *Hist. of Reform.*, vol 5, p. 103; Edin., 1853.

²³Cotton's *Abridgment*, p. 128, 50 Edw. III., apud Lewis *Life of Wiclif*, p. 34; Oxford, 1820. Fox, *Acts and Mon.* vol. 1, p. 552.

²⁴Hume, *Hist. of Eng.*, vol. 1, p. 335; Lond., 1826.

Chapter 3: Wicliffe's Battle with Rome for England's Independence

Impatience of the King and the Nation—Assembling of Lords and Commons—Shall England Bow to Rome?—The Debate—The Pope's Claim Unanimously Repudiated—England on the Road to Protestantism—Wicliffe's Influence—Wicliffe Attacked by an Anonymous Monk—His Reply—Vindicates the Nation's Independence—A Momentous Issue—A Greater Victory than Crecy—His Appeal to Rome Lost—Begins to be regarded as the Centre of a New Age

Picture: Balliol College, Oxford (about the time of Wicliffe)

Picture: The Coliseum, Rome

When England began to resist the Papacy it began to grow in power and wealth. Loosening its neck from the yoke of Rome, it lifted up its head proudly among the nations. Innocent III., crowning a series of usurpations by the submission of King John - an act of baseness that stands alone in the annals of England - had sustained himself master of the kingdom. But the great Pontiff was bidden, somewhat gruffly, stand off. The Northern nobles, who knew little about theology, but cared a great deal for independence, would be masters in their own isle, and they let the haughty wearer of the tiara know this when they framed Magna Charta. Turning to King John they told him, in effect, that if he was to be the slave of an Italian priest, he could not be the master of Norman barons. The tide once turned continued to flow; the two famous statutes of Provisors and Praemunire were enacted. These were a sort of double breast-work: the first was meant to keep out the flood of usurpations that was setting in from Rome upon England; and the second was intended to close the door against the tithes, revenues, appeals, and obedience, which were flowing in an ever-augmenting stream from England to the Vatican. Great Britain never performed an act of resistance to the Papacy but there came along with it a quickening of her own

energies and a strengthening of her liberty. So was it now; her soul began to bound upwards.

This was the moment chosen by Urban V. to advance his insolent demand. How often have Popes failed to read the signs of the times! Urban had signally failed to do so. The nation, though still submitting to the spiritual burdens of Rome, was becoming restive under her supremacy and pecuniary exactions. The Parliament had entered on a course of legislation to set bounds to these avaricious encroachments. The king too was getting sore at this "defacing of the ancient laws, and spoiling of his crown," and with the laurels of Crecy on his brow, he was in no mood for repairing to Rome as Urban commanded, and paying down a thousand marks for permission to wear the crown which he was so well able to defend with his sword. Edward assembled his Parliament in 1366, and, laying the Pope's letter before it, bade it take counsel and say what answer should be returned.

"Give us," said the estates of the realm, "a day to think over the matter." ¹ The king willingly granted them that space of time. They assembled again on the morrow - prelates, lords, and commons. Shall England, now becoming mistress of the seas, bow at the feet of the Pope? It is a great crisis! We eagerly scan the faces of the council, for the future of England hangs on its resolve. Shall the nation retrograde to the days of John, or shall it go forward to even higher glory than it has achieved under Edward? Wicliffe was present on that occasion, and has preserved a summary of the speeches. The record is interesting, as perhaps the earliest reported debate in Parliament, and still more interesting from the gravity of the issues depending thereon. ²

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A military baron is the first to rise. "The Kingdom of England," said he, opening the debate, "was won by the sword, and by that sword has been defended. Let the Pope then gird on his sword,

¹Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 552.

²Lechler makes the bold supposition that Wicliffe was a member of this Parliament. He finds it upon a passage in Wicliffe's treatise, *The Church*, to the effect that the Bishop of Rochester told him (Wicliffe) in public Parliament, with great vehemence, that conclusions were condemned by the Roman Curia. He thinks it probable from this that the Reformer had at one time been in Parliament. (Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 1, p. 332.)

and come and try to exact this tribute by force, and I for one am ready to resist him.” This is not spoken like an obedient son of the Church, but all the more a leal subject of England. Scarcely more encouraging to the supporters of the Papal claim was the speech of the second baron. “He only,” said he, “is entitled to secular tribute who legitimately exercises secular rule, and is able to give secular protection. The Pope cannot legitimately do either; he is a minister of the Gospel, not a temporal ruler. His duty is to give ghostly counsel, not corporal protection. Let us see that he abide within the limits of his spiritual office, where we shall obey him; but if he shall choose to transgress these limits, he must take the consequences.” “The Pope,” said a third, following in the line of the second speaker, “calls himself the servant of the servants of God. Very well: he can claim recompense only for service done. But where are the services which he renders to this land? Does he minister to us in spirituals? Does he help us in temporals? Does he not rather greedily drain our treasures, and often for the benefit of our enemies? I give my voice against this tribute.”

“On what grounds was this tribute originally demanded?” asked another. “Was it not for absolving King John, and relieving the kingdom from interdict? But to bestow spiritual benefits for money is sheer simony; it is a piece of ecclesiastical swindling. Let the lords spiritual and temporal wash their hands of a transaction so disgraceful. But if it is as feudal superior of the kingdom that the Pope demands this tribute, why ask a thousand marks? why not ask the throne, the soil, the people of England? If his title be good for these thousand marks, it is good for a great deal more. The Pope, on the same principle, may declare the throne vacant, and fill it with whomsoever he pleases.” “Pope Urban tells us” - so spoke another - “that all kingdoms are Christ’s, and that he as His vicar holds England for Christ; but as the Pope is peccable, and may abuse his trust, it appears to me that it were better that we should hold our land directly and alone of Christ.” “Let us,” said the last speaker, “go at once to the root of this matter. King John had no right to gift away the Kingdom of England without the consent of the nation. That consent was never given. The golden seal of the king, and the seals of the few nobles whom John persuaded or coerced to join him in this transaction, do not constitute the national consent. If John

gifted his subjects to Innocent like so many chattels, Innocent may come and take his property if he can. We the people of England had no voice in the matter; we hold the bargain null and void from the beginning.”³

So spake the Parliament of Edward III. Not a voice was raised in support of the arrogant demand of Urban. Prelate, baron, and commoner united in repudiating it as insulting to England; and these men expressed themselves in that plain, brief, and pithy language which betokens deep conviction as well as determined resolution. If need were, these bold words would be followed by deeds equally bold. The hands of the barons were on the hilts of their swords as they uttered them. They were, in the first place, subjects of England; and, in the second place, members of the Church of Rome. The Pope accounts no one a good Catholic who does not reverse this order and put his spiritual above his temporal allegiance - his Church before his country. This firm attitude of the Parliament put an end to the matter. The question which Urban had really raised was this, and nothing less than this: Shall the Pope or the king be sovereign of England? The answer of the Parliament was, “Not the Pope, but the king;” and from that hour the claim of the former was not again advanced, at least in explicit terms.

The decision at which the Parliament arrived was unanimous. It reproduced in brief compass both the argument and spirit of the speeches. Few such replies were in those days carried to the foot of the Papal throne. “Forasmuch” - so ran the decision of the three estates of the realm - “as neither King John, nor any other king, could bring his realm and kingdom into such thralldom and subjection but by common assent of Parliament, the which was not given, therefore that which he did was against his oath at his coronation, besides many other causes. If, therefore, the Pope should attempt anything against the king by process, or other matters in deed, the king, with all his subjects, should, with all their force and power, resist the same.”⁴

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³These speeches are reported by Wicliffe in a treatise preserved in the Selden MSS., and printed by the Rev. John Lewis in his *Life of Wiclif*, App. No. 30, p. 349; Oxford, 1820.

⁴Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 552. Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 19. Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol 1, p. 266; Lond., 1828.

Thus far had England, in the middle of the fourteenth century, advanced on the road to the Reformation. The estates of the realm had unanimously repudiated one of the two great branches of the Papacy. The dogma of the vicarship binds up the spiritual and the temporal in one anomalous jurisdiction. England had denied the latter; and this was a step towards questioning, and finally repudiating, the former. It was quite natural that the nation should first discover the falsity of the temporal supremacy, before seeing the equal falsity of the spiritual. Urban had put the matter in a light in which no one could possibly mistake it. In demanding payment of a thousand marks annually, he translated, as we say, the theory of the temporal supremacy into a palpable fact. The theory might have passed a little longer without question, had it not been put into this ungracious form. The halo which encompassed the Papal fabric during the Middle Ages began to wane, and men took courage to criticize a system whose immense prestige had blinded them hitherto. Such was the state of mind in which we now find the English nation. It betokened a reformation at no very great distance.

But largely, indeed mainly, had Wicliffe contributed to bring about this state of feeling in England. He had been the teacher of the barons and commons. He had propounded these doctrines from his chair in Oxford before they were proclaimed by the assembled estates of the realm. But for the spirit and views with which he had been quietly leavening the nation, the demand of Urban might have met a different reception. It would not, we believe, have been complied with; the position England had now attained in Europe, and the deference paid her by foreign nations, would have made submission impossible; but without Wicliffe the resistance would not have been placed on so intelligible a ground, nor would it have been urged with so resolute a patriotism. The firm attitude assumed effectually extinguished the hopes of the Vatican, and rid England ever after of all such irritating and insolent demands.

That Wicliffe's position in this controversy was already a prominent one, and that the sentiments expressed in Parliament were but the echo of his teachings in Oxford, are attested by an event which now took place. The Pope found a supporter in England, though not in Parliament. A monk, whose name has not come down to us, stood forward to demonstrate the righteousness of the claim of Urban V.

This controversialist laid down the fundamental proposition that, as vicar of Christ, the Pope is the feudal superior of monarchs, and the lord paramount of their kingdoms. Thence he deduced the following conclusions: - that all sovereigns owe him obedience and tribute; that vassalage was specially due from the English monarch in consequence of the surrender of the kingdom to the Pope by John; that Edward had clearly forfeited his throne by the non-payment of the annual tribute; and, in fine, that all ecclesiastics, regulars and seculars, were exempt from the civil jurisdiction, and under no obligation to obey the citation or answer before the tribunal of the magistrate. Singling out Wicliffe by name, the monk challenged him to disprove the propositions he had advanced.

Wicliffe took up the challenge which had been thrown down to him. The task was one which involved tremendous hazard; not because Wicliffe's logic was weak, or his opponent's unanswerable; but because the power which he attacked could ill brook to have its foundations searched out, and its hollowness exposed, and because the more completely Wicliffe should triumph, the more probable was it that he would feel the heavy displeasure of the enemy against whom he did battle. He had a cause pending in the Vatican at that very moment, and if he vanquished the Pope in England, how easy would it be for the Pope to vanquish him at Rome! Wicliffe did not conceal from himself this and other greater perils; nevertheless, he stepped down into the arena. In opening the debate, he styles himself "the king's peculiar clerk,"⁵ from which we infer that the royal eye had already lighted upon him, attracted by his erudition and talents, and that one of the royal chaplaincies had been conferred upon him.

The controversy was conducted on Wicliffe's side with great moderation. He contents himself with stating the grounds of objection to the temporal power, rather than working out the argument and pressing it home. These are - the natural rights of men, the laws of the realm of England, and the precepts of Holy Writ. "Already," he says, "a third and more of England is in the hands of the Pope. There cannot," he argues, "be two temporal sovereigns in one country;

⁵"But inasmuch as I am the king's peculiar clerk [peculiaris regis clericus], I the more willingly undertake the office of defending and counseling that the king exercises his just rule in the realm of England when he refuses tribute to the Roman Pontiff." (Codd. MSS. Joh. Seldeni; Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, Appendix, No. 30.)

either Edward is king or Urban is king. We make our choice. We accept Edward of England and refuse Urban of Rome.” Then he falls back on the debate in Parliament, and presents a summary of the speeches of the spiritual and temporal lords.⁶ Thus far Wicliffe puts the estates of the realm in the front, and covers himself with the shield of their authority: but doubtless the sentiments are his; the stamp of his individuality and genius is plainly to be seen upon them. From his bow was the arrow shot by which the temporal power of the Papacy in England was wounded. If his courage was shown in not declining the battle, his prudence and wisdom were equally conspicuous in the manner in which he conducted it. It was the affair of the king and of the nation, and not his merely; and it was masterly tactics to put it so as that it might be seen to be no contemptible quarrel between an unknown monk and an Oxford doctor, but a controversy between the King of England and the Pontiff of Rome.⁷

And the service now rendered by Wicliffe was great. The eyes of all the European nations were at that moment on England, watching with no little anxiety the issue of the conflict which she was then waging with a power that sought to reduce the whole earth to vassalage. If England should bow herself before the Papal chair, and the victor of Crecy do homage to Urban for his crown, what monarch could hope to stand erect, and what nation could expect to rescue its independence from the grasp of the tiara? The submission of England would bring such an accession of prestige and strength to the Papacy, that the days of Innocent III. would return, and a tempest of excommunications and interdicts would again lower over every throne, and darken the sky of every kingdom, as during the reign of the mightiest of the Papal chiefs. The crisis was truly a great one. It was now to be seen whether the tide was to advance or to go back. The decision of England determined that the waters of Papal tyranny should henceforth recede, and every nation hailed the result with joy as a victory won for itself. To England the benefits which accrued from this conflict were lasting as well as great. The fruits reaped from the great battles of Crecy and Poitiers have long

⁶The same from which we have already quoted.

⁷See Wicliffe's Tractate, which Lewis gives in his Appendix, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 349.

since disappeared; but as regards this victory won over Urban V., England is enjoying at this very hour the benefits which resulted from it. But it must not be forgotten that, though Edward III. and his Parliament occupied the foreground, the real champion in this battle was Wicliffe.⁸

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It is hardly necessary to say that Wicliffe was nonsuited at Rome. His wardenship of Canterbury Hall, to which he was appointed by the founder, and from which he had been extruded by Archbishop Lingham, was finally lost. His appeal to the Pope was made in 1367; but a long delay took place, and it was not till 1370 that the judgment of the court of Rome was pronounced, ratifying his extrusion, and putting Lingham's monks in sole possession of Canterbury College. Wicliffe had lost his wardenship, but he had largely contributed to save the independence of his country. In winning this fight he had done more for it than if he had conquered on many battle-fields. He had yet greater services to render to England, and yet greater penalties to pay for his patriotism. Soon after this he took his degree of Doctor in Divinity - a distinction more rare in those days than in ours; and the chair of theology, to which he was now raised, extended the circle of his influence, and paved the way for the fulfillment of his great mission. From this time Wicliffe began to be regarded as the center of a new age.

⁸Wicliffe had pioneers who contested the temporal power of the Pope. One of these, we have already seen, was Arnold of Brescia. Nearer home he had two notable precursors: the first, Marsilius Patavinus, who in his work, *Defensor Pacis*, written in defense of the Emperor Lewis, excommunicated by Clement VI., maintains that "the Pope hath no superiority above other bishops, much less above the king" (Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 509); and the second, William Occam, in England, also a strenuous opponent of the temporal power. See his eight propositions on the temporal power of the Papacy, in Fox.

Chapter 4: Wicliffe's Battle with the Mendicant Friars

Wicliffe's Mental Conflicts—Rise of the Monastic Orders—Fascinating Pictures of Monks and Monasteries—Early Corruption of the Orders—Testimony of Contemporary Witnesses—The New Monastic Orders—Reason for their Institution—St. Francis—His Early Life—His Appearance before Innocent III—Commission to Found an Order—Rapid Increase of the Franciscans—St. Dominic—His Character—Founds the Dominicans—Preaching Missionaries and Inquisitors—Constitution of the New Orders—The Old and New Monks Compared—Their Vow of Poverty—How Evaded—Their Garb—Their Vast Wealth—Palatial Edifices—Their Frightful Degeneracy—Their Swarms Overspread England—Their Illegal Practices—The Battle against them Begun by Armachanus—He Complains against them to the Pope—His Complaint Disregarded—He Dies

Picture: View in the Campagna

Picture: His eyes burning with a strange fire, he [St. Francis]wandered about the country

Picture: Group of Mendicant Friars

Picture: The Belfry at Bruges

We come now to relate briefly the second great battle which our Reformer was called to wage; and which, if we have regard to the prior date of its origin - for it was begun before the conclusion of that of which we have just spoken - ought to be called the first. We refer to his contest with the mendicant friars. It was still going on when his battle against the temporal power was finished; in fact it continued, more or less, to the end of his life. The controversy involved great principles, and had a marked influence on the mind of Wicliffe in the way of developing his views on the whole subject of the Papacy. From questioning the mere abuse of the Papal prerogative, he began

to question its legitimacy. At every step a new doubt presented itself; this sent him back again to the Scriptures. Every page he read shed new light into his mind, and discovered some new invention or error of man, till at last he saw that the system of the Gospel and the system of the Papacy were utterly and irreconcilably at variance, and that if he would follow the one he must finally renounce the other. This decision, as we gather from Fox, was not made without many tears and groans. "After he had a long time professed divinity in Oxford," says the chronicler, "and perceiving the true doctrine of Christ's Gospel to be adulterate, and defiled with so many filthy inventions of bishops, sects of monks, and dark errors, and that he after long debating and deliberating with himself (with many secret sighs and bewailings in his mind the general ignorance of the whole world) could no longer suffer or abide the same, he at the last determined with himself to help and to remedy such things as he saw to be wide and out of the way. But forasmuch as he saw that this dangerous meddling could not be attempted or stirred without great trouble, neither that these things, which had been so long time with use and custom rooted and grafted in men's minds, could be suddenly plucked up or taken away, he thought with himself that this matter should be done by little and little. Wherefore he, taking his original at small occasions, thereby opened himself a way or mean to greater matters. First he assailed his adversaries in logical and metaphysical questions... by these originals the way was made unto greater points, so that at length he came to touch the matters of the Sacraments, and other abuses of the Church." ¹

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The rise of the monastic orders, and their rapid and prodigious diffusion over all Christendom, and even beyond it, are too well known to require minute or lengthy narration. The tombs of Egypt, the deserts of Thebais, the mountains of Sinai, the rocks of Palestine, the islands of the Aegean and Tuscan Seas, were peopled with colonies of hermits and anchorites, who, fleeing from the world, devoted themselves to a life of solitude and spiritual meditation. The secularity and corruption of the parochial clergy, engendered by the wealth which flowed in upon the Church in early times, rendered necessary, it was supposed, a new order, which might exhibit a great

¹Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol 1, p. 556.

and outstanding example of virtue. Here, in these anchorites, was the very pattern, it was believed, which the age needed. These men, living in seclusion, or gathered in little fraternities, had renounced the world, had taken a vow of poverty and obedience, and were leading humble, laborious, frugal, chaste, virtuous lives, and exemplifying, in a degenerate time, the holiness of the Gospel. The austerity and poverty of the monastery redeemed Christianity from the stain which the affluence and pride of the cathedral had brought upon it. So the world believed, and felt itself edified by the spectacle.

For a while, doubtless, the monastery was the asylum of a piety which had been banished from the world. Fascinating pictures have been drawn of the sanctity of these establishments. Within their walls peace made her abode when violence distracted the outer world. The land around them, from the skillful and careful cultivation of the brotherhood, smiled like a garden, while the rest of the soil, through neglect or barbarism, was sinking into a desert; here letters were cultivated, and the arts of civilized life preserved, while the general community, engrossed in war, prosecuted but languidly the labours of peace. To the gates of the monastery came the halt, the blind, the deaf; and the charitable inmates never failed to pity their misery and supply their necessities. In fine, while the castle of the neighboring baron resounded with the clang of weapons, or the noise of wassail, the holy chimes ascending from the monastery at morn and eve, told of the devotions, the humble prayers, and the fervent praises in which the Fathers passed their time.

These pictures are so lovely, and one is so gratified to think that ages so rude, and so ceaselessly buffeted by war, had nevertheless their quiet retreats, where the din of arms did not drown the voice of the muses, or silence the song of piety, that we feel almost as if it were an offense against religion to doubt their truth. But we confess that our faith in them would have been greater if they had been painted by contemporary chroniclers, instead of being mostly the creation of poets who lived in a later age. We really do not know where to look in real history for the originals of these enchanting descriptions. Still, we do not doubt that there is a measure of truth in them; that, during the early period of their existence, these establishments did in some degree shelter piety and preserve art, did dispense alms and teach industry. And we know that even down to

nearly the Reformation there were instances of men who, hidden from the world, here lived alone with Christ, and fed their piety at the fountains of the Word of God. These instances were, however, rare, and suggested comparisons not favorable to the rest of the Fathers.

But one thing history leaves in no wise doubtful, even that the monastic orders speedily and to a fearful degree became corrupt. It would have been a miracle if it had been otherwise. The system was in violation of the fundamental laws of nature and of society, as well as of the Bible. How can virtue be cultivated apart from the exercise of it? If the world is a theater of temptation, it is still more a school of discipline, and a nursery of virtue. "Living in them," says a nun of Cambray, a descendant of Sir Thomas More, "I can speak by experience, if one be not in a right course of prayer, and other exercises between God and our soul, one's nature groweth much worse than ever it would have been if she had lived in the world."² [76]

It is in society, not in solitude, that we can be trained to self-denial, to patience, to loving-kindness and magnanimity. In solitude there is nothing to be borne with or overcome, save cold, or hunger, or the beasts of the desert, which, however much they may develop the powers of the body, cannot nourish the virtues of the soul.

In point of fact, these monasteries did, we know, become eventually more corrupt than the world which their inmates had forsaken. By the year 1100 one of their advocates says he gives them up.³ The pictures which some Popish writers have given us of them in the thirteenth century - Clemangis, for instance - we dare not transfer to our pages. The repute of their piety multiplied the number of their patrons, and swelled the stream of their benefactions. With riches came their too frequent concomitants, luxury and pride. Their vow of poverty was no barrier; for though, as individuals, they could possess no property, they might as a body corporate own any amount of wealth. Lands, houses, hunting-grounds, and forests; the tithing of

²Gertrude More, *Confessions*, p. 246.

³"One great butt of Wicliffe's sarcasm," says Lechler, "was the monks. Once, in speaking of the prayers of the monks, he remarked, "a great inducement to the founding of cloisters was the delusion that the prayers of the inmates were of more value than all worldly goods, and yet it does not seem as if the prayers of those cloistered people are so mightily powerful; nor can we understand why they should be so, unless God hears them for their rosy cheeks and fat lips.'" (Lechler, vol. 1, p. 737.)

tolls, of orchards, of fisheries, of kine, and wool, and cloth, formed the dowry of the monastery. The vast and miscellaneous inventory of goods which formed the common property of the fraternity, included everything that was good for food and pleasant to the eye; curious furniture for their apartments, dainty apparel for their persons; the choice treasures of the field, of the tree, and the river, for their tables; soft-paced mules by day, and luxurious couches at night. Their head, the abbot, equaled princes in wealth, and surpassed them in pride. Such, from the humble beginnings of the cell, with its bed of stone and its diet of herbs, had come to be the condition of the monastic orders long before the days of Wicliffe. From being the ornament of Christianity, they were now its opprobrium; and from being the buttress of the Church of Rome, they had now become its scandal.

We shall quote the testimony of one who was not likely to be too severe in reproving the manners of his brethren. Peter, Abbot of Cluny, thus complains: "Our brethren despise God, and having passed all shame, eat flesh now all the days of the week except Friday. They run here and there, and, as kites and vultures, fly with great swiftness where the most smoke of the kitchen is, and where they smell the best roast and boiled. Those that wilt not do as the rest, they mock and treat as hypocrites and profane. Beans, cheese, eggs, and even fish itself, can no more please their nice palates; they only relish the flesh-pots of Egypt. Pieces of boiled and roasted pork, good fat veal, otters and hares, the best geese and pullets, and, in a word, all sorts of flesh and fowl do now cover the tables of our holy monks. But why do I talk? Those things are grown too common, they are cloyed with them. They must have something more delicate. They would have got for them kids, harts, boars, and wild bears. One must for them beat the bushes with a great number of hunters, and by the help of birds of prey must one chase the pheasants, and partridges, and ring-doves, for fear the servants of God (who are our good monks) should perish with hunger."⁴

St. Bernard, in the twelfth century, wrote an apology for the monks of Cluny, which he addressed to William, Abbot of St. Thierry. The work was undertaken on purpose to recommend the order, and yet the author cannot restrain himself from reproving

⁴Petrus Abbas Cluniaci, lib. vi., epit. 7; apud Gabriel d'Emillianne, p. 92.

the disorders which had crept into it; and having broken ground on this field, he runs on like one who found it impossible to stop. "I can never enough admire," says he, "how so great a licentiousness of meals, habits, beds, equipages, and horses, can get in and be established as it were among monks." After enlarging on the sumptuousness of the apparel of the Fathers, the extent of their stud, the rich trappings of their mules, and the luxurious furniture of their chambers, St. Bernard proceeds to speak of their meals, of which he gives a very lively description. "Are not their mouths and ears," says he, "equally filled with victuals and confused voices? And while they thus spin out their immoderate feasts, is there any one who offers to regulate the debauch? No, certainly. Dish dances after dish, and for abstinence, which they profess, two rows of fat fish appear swimming in sauce upon the table.

Are you cloyed with these? the cook has art sufficient to prick you others of no less charms. Thus plate is devoured after plate, and such natural transitions are made from one to the other, that they fill their bellies, but seldom blunt their appetites. And all this," [77] exclaims St. Bernard, "in the name of charity, because consumed by men who had taken a vow of poverty, and must needs therefore be denominated 'the poor.'"

From the table of the monastery, where we behold course following course in quick and bewildering succession, St. Bernard takes us next to see the pomp with which the monks ride out. "I must always take the liberty," says he, "to inquire how the salt of the earth comes to be so depraved. What occasions men, who in their lives ought to be examples of humility, by their practice to give instructions and examples of vanity? And to pass by many other things, what a proof of humility is it to see a vast retinue of horses with their equipage, and a confused train of valets and footmen, so that the retinue of a single abbot outshines that of two bishops! May I be thought a liar if it be not true, that I have seen one single abbot attended by above sixty horse. Who could take these men for the fathers of monks, and the shepherds of souls? Or who would not be apt to take them rather for governors of cities and provinces? Why, though the master be four leagues off, must his train of equipage reach to his very doors?

One would take these mighty preparations for the subsistence of an army, or for provisions to travel through a very large desert.”⁵

But this necessitated a remedy. The damage inflicted on the Papacy by the corruption and notorious profligacy of the monks must be repaired - but how? The reformation of the early orders was hopeless; but new fraternities could be called into existence. This was the method adopted. The order of Franciscans was instituted by Innocent III. in the year 1215, and the Dominicans were sanctioned by his successor Honorius III. a few years later (1218).⁶ The object of their institution was to recover, by means of their humility, poverty, and apostolic zeal, the credit which had been lost to the Church through the pride, wealth, and indolence of the elder monks.

[78] Moreover, the new times on which the Church felt that she was
[79] entering, demanded new services. Preachers were needed to confute the heretics, and this was carefully kept in view in the constitution of the newly-created orders.

The founders of these two orders were very unlike in their natural disposition and temper.

St. Francis, the founder of the Franciscans, or Minorites, as they came to be termed, was born at Assisi, in Umbria, in 1182. His father was a rich merchant of that town. The historians of St. Francis relate that certain signs accompanied his birth, which prognosticated his future greatness. His mother, when her time had come, was taken in labor so severe, and her pains were prolonged for so many days, that she was on the point of death. At that crisis an angel, in the guise of a pilgrim, presented himself at her door, and demanded alms. The charity sought was instantly bestowed, and the grateful pilgrim proceeded to tell the inmates what they must do in order that the lady of the mansion might become the joyful mother of a son. They were to take up her couch, carry her out, and lay her in the stable. The pilgrim's instructions were followed, the pains of labor were now speedily ended, and thus it came to pass that the child first saw the light among the "beasts." "This was the first prerogative,"

⁵Dupin, *Life of St. Bernard*, cent. 12, chap. 4.

⁶Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 13, chap. 10.

remarks one of his historians, "in which St. Francis resembled Jesus Christ - he was born in a stable."⁷

Despite these auguries, betokening a more than ordinary sanctity, Francis grew up "a debauched youth," says D'Emillianne, "and, having robbed his father, was disinherited, but he seemed not to be very much troubled at it."⁸ He was seized with a malignant fever, and the frenzy that it induced appears never to have wholly left him. He lay down on his bed of sickness a gay profligate and spendthrift, and he rose up from it entirely engrossed with the idea that all holiness and virtue consisted in poverty.

He acted out his theory to the letter. He gave away all his property, he exchanged garments with a beggar whom he met on the highway; and, squalid, emaciated, covered with dirt and rags, his eyes burning with a strange fire, he wandered about the country around his native town of Assisi, followed by a crowd of boys, who hooted and jeered at the madman, which they believed him to be. Being joined by seven disciples, he made his way to Rome, to lay his project before the Pope. On arriving there he found Innocent III. ailing himself on the terrace of his palace of the Lateran.

What a subject for a painter! The haughtiest of the Pontiffs - the man who, like another Jove, had but to nod and kings were tumbled from their thrones, and nations were smitten down with interdict - was pacing to and fro beneath the pillared portico of his palace, revolving, doubtless, new and mightier projects to illustrate the glory and strengthen the dominion of the Papal throne. At times his eye wanders as far as the Apennines, so grandly walling in the Campagna, which lies spread out beneath him - not as now, a blackened expanse, but a glorious garden sparkling with villas, and gay with vineyards and olive and fig-trees. If in front of his palace was this goodly prospect, behind it was another, forming the obverse of that on which the Pontiff's eye now rested. A hideous gap, covered with the fragments of what had once been temples and

⁷Storia degli Ordini Monastici, Religiosi, e Militari, etc., tradotto dal Franzese del P. Giuseppe Francesco Fontana, Milanese, tom. 7, cap. 1, p. 2; edit. Lucca, 1739, con licenza de Superiori.

⁸Gabriel d'Emillianne, History of Monastical Orders, p. 158; Lond., 1693. Francesco Fontana, Storia degli Ordini Monastici, tom. 7, cap. 1, pp. 6, 7. Alban Butler, Lives of the Saints, vol. 10, p. 71; Lond., 1814.

palaces, and extending from the Lateran to the Coliseum, marred the beauty of the Pontifical city. This unsightly spectacle was the memorial of the war of Investitures, and would naturally carry the thoughts of Innocent back to the times of Hildebrand, and the fierce struggles which his zeal for the exaltation of the Papal chair had provoked in Christendom.

What a tide of prosperous fortune had flowed in upon Rome, during the century which had elapsed since Gregory VII. swayed the scepter that Innocent now wielded! Not a Pontificate, not a decade, that had not witnessed an addition to the height of that stupendous Babel which the genius and statesmanship of all the Popes from Gregory to Innocent had been continuously and successfully occupied in rearing. And now the fabric stood complete, for higher it was hardly possible to conceive of its being carried. Rome was now more truly mistress of the world than even in the days of the Caesars. Her sway went deeper into the heart and soul of the nations. Again was she sending forth her legates, as of old her pro-consuls, to govern her subject kingdoms; again was she issuing her edicts, which all the world obeyed; again were kings and suppliant princes waiting at her gates; again were her highways crowded with ambassadors and suitors from every quarter of Christendom; from the most distant regions came the pilgrim and the devotee to pray at her holy shrines; night and day, without intermission, there flowed from her gates a spiritual stream to refresh the world; crosiers and palls, priestly offices and mystic virtues, pardons and dispensations, relics and amulets, benedictions and anathemas; and, in return for this, the tribute of all the earth was being carried into her treasuries. On these pleasurable subjects, doubtless, rested the thoughts of Innocent as Francis of Assisi drew near.

The eye of the Pontiff lights upon the strange figure. Innocent halts to survey more closely the man. His dress is that of a beggar, his looks are haggard, his eye is wild, yet despite these untoward appearances there is something about him that seems to say, "I come with a mission, and therefore do I venture into this presence. I am here not to beg, but to give alms to the Popedom;" and few kings have had it in their power to lay greater gifts at the feet of Rome than that which this man in rags had come to bestow. Curious to know what he would say, Innocent permitted his strange visitor to

address him. Francis hurriedly described his project; but the Pope failed to comprehend its importance, or to credit Francis with the power of carrying it out; he ordered the enthusiast to be gone; and Francis retired, disappointed and downcast, believing his scheme to be nipped in the bud. ⁹

The incident, however, had made a deeper impression upon the Pontiff than he was aware. As he lay on his couch by night, the beggar seemed again to stand before him, and to plead his cause. A palm-tree - so Innocent thought in his sleep - suddenly sprang up at his feet, and waxed into a goodly stature. In a second dream Francis seemed to stretch out his hand to prop up the Lateran, which was menaced with overthrow. ¹⁰ When the Pope awoke, he gave orders to seek out the strange man from Umbria, and bring him before him. Convening his cardinals, he gave them an opportunity of hearing the project. To Innocent and his conclave the idea of Francis appeared to be good; and to whom, thought they, could they better commit the carrying of it out than to the enthusiast who had conceived it? To this man in rags did Rome now give her commission. Armed with the Pontifical sanction, empowering him to found, arrange, and set a-working such an order as he had sketched out, Francis now left the presence of the Pope and cardinals, and departed to begin his work. ¹¹

The enthusiasm that burned so fiercely in his own brain kindled a similar enthusiasm in that of others. Soon St. Francis found a dozen men willing to share his views and take part in his project. The dozen speedily multiplied into a hundred, and the hundred into thousands, and the increase went on at a rate of which history scarcely affords another such example. Before his death, St. Francis had the satisfaction of seeing 5,000 of his monks assemble in his convent in Italy to hold a general chapter, and as each convent sent only two delegates, the convocation represented 2,500 convents. ¹² The solitary fanatic had become an army; his disciples filled all the countries

⁹Storia degli Ordini Monastici, tom. 7, cap. 1, p. 14.

¹⁰Ibid. Alb. Butler, *Lives of the Saints*, vol 10, p. 77.

¹¹Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 13, vol. 11, chap. 10; Lond., 1699. *Storia degli Ordini Monastici*, tom. 7, cap. 1, pp. 14, 15.

¹²Storia degli Ordini Monastici, tom. 7, cap. 1, p. 19. Gabriel d'Emilliane, *Hist. of Monast. Orders*, p. 171.

of Christendom; every object and idea they subordinated to that of their chief; and, bound together by their vow, they prosecuted with indefatigable zeal the service to which they had consecrated themselves. This order has had in it five Popes and forty-five cardinals.
13

St. Dominic, the founder of the Dominicans, was born in Aragon, 1170. He was cast in a different mold from St. Francis. His enthusiasm was as fiery, his zeal as intense;¹⁴ but to these qualities he added a cool judgment, a firm will, a somewhat stern temper, and great knowledge of affairs. Dominic had witnessed the ravages of heresy in the southern provinces of France; he had also had occasion to mark the futility of those splendidly equipped missions, that Rome sent forth from time to time to convert the Albigenses. He saw that these missionaries left more heretics on their departure than they had found on their arrival. Mitered dignitaries, mounted on richly caparisoned mules, followed by a sumptuous train of priests and monks, and other attendants, too proud or too ignorant to preach, and able only to dazzle the gaze of the multitude by the magnificence of their ceremonies, attested most conclusively the wealth of Rome, but did not attest with equal conclusiveness the truth of her tenets. Instead of bishops on palfreys, Dominic called for monks in wooden soles to preach to the heretics.

[81] Repairing to Rome, he too laid his scheme before Innocent, offering to raise an army that would perambulate Europe in the interests of the Papal See, organized after a different fashion, and that, he hoped, would be able to give a better account of the heretics. Their garb as humble, their habits as austere, and their speech as plain as those of the peasants they were to address, these missionaries would soon win the heretics from the errors into which they had been seduced; and, living on alms, they would cost the Papal exchequer nothing. Innocent, for some reason or other, perhaps from having sanctioned the Franciscans so recently, refused his consent. But Pope Honorius was more compliant; he confirmed the proposed order of Dominic; and from beginnings equally small with those of

¹³Alb. Butler, *Lives of the Saints*, 5. 10, p. 100.

¹⁴Gabriel d'Emillianne, *Hist. of Monast. Order's*. This author says that the mother of St. Dominic before his birth dreamed that she was brought to bed of a dog (some say a wolf) carrying a burning torch in its mouth, wherewith it set the world on fire (p. 147).

the Franciscans, the growth of the Dominicans in popularity and numbers was equally rapid.¹⁵

The Dominicans were divided into two bands. The business of the one was to preach, that of the other to slay those whom the first were not able to convert.¹⁶ The one refuted heresy, the other exterminated heretics. This happy division of labor, it was thought, would secure the thorough doing of the work. The preachers rapidly multiplied, and in a few years the sound of their voices was heard in almost all the cities of Europe. Their learning was small, but their enthusiasm kindled them into eloquence, and their harangues were listened to by admiring crowds. The Franciscans and Dominicans did for the Papacy in the centuries that preceded the Reformation, what the Jesuits have done for it in the centuries that have followed it.

Before proceeding to speak of the battle which Wicliffe was called to wage with the new fraternities, it is necessary to indicate the peculiarities in their constitution and organization that fitted them to cope with the emergencies amid which their career began, and which had made it necessary to call them into existence. The elder order of monks were recluses. They had no relation to the world which they had abandoned, and no duties to perform to it, beyond the example of austere piety which they offered for its edification. Their sphere was the cell, or the walls of the monastery, where their whole time was presumed be spent in prayer and meditation.

The newly-created orders, on the other hand, were not confined to a particular spot. They had convents, it is true, but these were rather hotels or temporary abodes, where they might rest when on their preaching tours. Their sphere was the world; they were to perambulate provinces and cities, and to address all who were willing to listen to them. Preaching had come to be one of the lost arts. The secular or parochial clergy seldom entered a pulpit; they were too ignorant to write a sermon, too indolent to preach one even were it prepared to their hand. They instructed their flocks by a service of ceremonials, and by prayers and litanies, in a language which the people did not understand. Wicliffe assures us that in his time "there

¹⁵Gabriel d'Emillianne, *Hist. of Monast. Orders*, p. 148.

¹⁶*Ibid.* "A troop of merciless fellows, whom he [St. Dominic] maintained to cut the throats of heretics when he was a-preaching; he called them the Militia of Jesus Christ."

were many unable curates that knew not the ten commandments, nor could read their psalter, nor could understand a verse of it.”¹⁷ The friars, on the other hand, betook themselves to their mother tongue, and, mingling familiarly with all classes of the community, they revived the forgotten practice of preaching, and plied it assiduously Sunday and week-day. They held forth in all places, as well as on all days, erecting their pulpit in the market, at the streetcorner, or in the chapel.

In one point especially the friars stood out in marked and advantageous contrast to the old monastic orders. The latter were scandalously rich, the former were severely and edifyingly poor. They lived on alms, and literally were beggars; hence their name of Mendicants. Christ and His apostles, it was affirmed, were mendicants; the profession, therefore, was an ancient and a holy one. The early monastic orders, it is true, equally with the Dominicans and Franciscans, had taken a vow of poverty; but the difference between the elder and the later monks lay in this, that while the former could not in their individual capacity possess property, in their corporate capacity they might and did possess it to an enormous amount; the latter, both as individuals and as a body, were disqualified by their vow from holding any property whatever. They could not so much as possess a penny in the world; and as there was nothing in their humble garb and frugal diet to belie their profession of poverty, their repute for sanctity was great, and their influence with all classes was in proportion. They seemed the very men for the times in which their lot was cast, and for the work which had been appointed them. They were emphatically the soldiers of the Pope, the household troops of the Vatican, traversing Christendom in two bands, yet forming one united army, which continually increased, and which, having no impedimenta to retard its march, advanced alertly and victoriously to combat heresy, and extended the fame and dominion of the Papal See.

If the rise of the Mendicant orders was unexampled in its rapidity, equally unexampled was the rapidity of their decline. The rock on which they split was the same which had proved so fatal to their

¹⁷Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 40. By a council held in Oxford, 1222, it was provided that the archdeacons in their visitations should “see that the clergy knew how to pronounce aright the form of baptism, and say the words of consecration in the canon of the mass.”

predecessors - riches. But how was it possible for wealth to enter when the door of the monastery was so effectually barred by a most stringent vow of poverty? Neither as individuals nor as a corporation, could they accept or hold a penny. Nevertheless, the fact was so; their riches increased prodigiously, and their degeneracy, consequent thereon, was even more rapid than the declension which former ages had witnessed in the Benedictines and Augustinians.

The original constitution of the Mendicant orders remained unaltered, their vow of poverty still stood unrepealed; they still lived on the alms of the faithful, and still wore their gown of coarse woolen cloth, ¹⁸ white in the case of the Dominicans, and girded with a broad sash; brown in the case of the Franciscans, and tied with a cord of three knots: in both cases curiously provided with numerous and capacious pouches, in which little images, square bits of paper, amulets, and rosaries, were mixed with bits of bread and cheese, morsels of flesh, and other victuals collected by begging. ¹⁹

But in the midst of all these signs of poverty, and of the professed observance of their vow, their hoards increased every day. How came this? Among the brothers were some subtle intellects, who taught them the happy distinction between proprietors and stewards. In the character of proprietors they could possess absolutely nothing; in the character of stewards they might hold wealth to any amount, and dispense it for the ends and uses of their order. ²⁰ This ingenious distinction unlocked the gates of their convents, and straightway a stream of gold, fed by the piety of their admirers, began to flow into them. They did not, like the other monastic fraternities, become landed proprietors - this kind of property not coming within the scope of that interpretation by which they had so materially qualified their vow - but in other respects they claimed a very ample freedom. The splendor of their edifices eclipsed those of the Benedictines

¹⁸Their habit or dress is described by Chaucer as consisting of a great hood, a scaplerie, a knotted girdle, and a wide cope. (Jack Upland.)

¹⁹The curiously knotted cord with which they gird themselves, "they say, hath virtue to heal the sick, to chase away the devil and all dangerous temptations, and serve what turn they please." (Gabriel d'Emillianne, *Hist. of Monast. Orders*, p. 174.)

²⁰This distinction is sanctioned by the Constitution issued by Nicholas III. in 1279, explaining and confirming the rule of St. Francis. This 1000 Constitution is still extant in the *Jus. Canon.*, lib. 6, tit. 12, cap. 3, commonly called Constitution Exiit, from its commencing, Exiit, etc.

and Augustinians. Churches which the skill of the architect and the genius of the painter did their utmost to glorify, convents and cloisters which monarchs might have been proud to inhabit,²¹ rose in all countries for the use of the friars. With this wealth came a multiform corruption - indolence, insolence, a dissolution of manners, and a grievous abuse of those vast privileges and powers which the Papal See, finding them so useful, had heaped upon them. "It is an awful presage," exclaims Matthew Paris, only forty years after their institution, "that in 300 years, nay, in 400 years and more, the old monastic orders have not so entirely degenerated as these fraternities."

Such was the state in which Wicliffe found the friars. Nay, we may conclude that in his time the corruption of the Mendicants far exceeded what it was in the days of Matthew Paris, a century earlier. He found in fact a plague fallen upon the kingdom, which was daily spreading and hourly intensifying its ravages. It was in 1360 that he began his public opposition to them. The Dominican friars entered England in 1321. In that year Gilbert de Fresney and twelve of his brethren settled at Oxford.²² The same causes that favored their growth on the Continent operated equally in England, and this little band recruited their ranks so rapidly, that soon they spread their swarms over all the kingdom. Forty-three houses of the Dominicans were established in England, where, from their black cloak and hood, they were popularly termed the Black Friars.²³

[83] Finding themselves now powerful, they attacked the laws and privileges of the University of Oxford, where they had established themselves, claiming independence of its jurisdiction. This drew on a battle between them and the college authorities. The first to oppose their encroachments was Fitzralph (Armachanus), who had been appointed to the chancellorship of Oxford in 1333, and in 1347 became Archbishop of Armagh. Fitzralph declared that under

²¹No traveler can have passed from Perugia to Terni without having had his attention called to the convent of St. Francis d'Assisi, which stands on the lower slope of the Apennines, overlooking the vale of the Clitumnus. It is in splendor a palace, and in size it is almost a little town. In this magnificent edifice is the tomb of the man who died under

²²Vaughan, *Life of Wicliffe*, vol. 1, pp. 250, 251.

²³Sharon Turner, *Hist. of England*, vol. 5, p. 101; Lond., 1830. "This order hath given to the Church 5 Popes, 48 cardinals, 23 patriarchs, 1,500 bishops, 600 archbishops, and a great number of eminent doctors and writers." (Alban Butler.)

this "pestiferous canker," as he styled mendicancy, everything that was good and fair - letters, industry, obedience, morals - was being blighted. He carried his complaints all the way to Avignon, where the Popes then lived, in the hope of effecting a reformation of this crying evil. The heads of the address which he delivered before the Pontiff were as follow: - That the friars were propagating a pestiferous doctrine, subversive of the testament of Jesus Christ; that, owing to their machinations, the ministers of the Church were decreasing; that the universities were decaying; that students could not find books to carry on their studies; that the friars were recruiting their ranks by robbing and circumventing children; that they cherished ambition under a feigned humility, that they concealed riches under a simulated poverty; and crept up by subtle means to be lords, archbishops, cardinals, chancellors of kingdoms, and privy councilors of monarchs.

We must give a specimen of his pleading before the Pontiff, as Fox has preserved it. "By the privileges," says Armachanus, "granted by the Popes to the friars, great enormities do arise." Among other abuses, he enumerates the following: - "The true shepherds do not know the faces of their flock. Item, great contention and sometimes blows arise between the friars and the secular curates, about titles, impropriations, and other avails. Item, divers young men, as well in universities as in their fathers' houses, are allured craftily by the friars, their confessors, to enter their orders; from whence, also, they cannot get out, though they would, to the great grief of their parents, and no less repentance to the young men themselves. No less inconvenience and danger also by the said friars riseth to the clergy, forsomuch as laymen, seeing their children thus to be stolen from them in the universities by the friars, do refuse therefore to send them to their studies, rather willing to keep them at home to their occupation, or to follow the plough, than so to be circumvented and defeated of their sons at the university, as by daily experience doth manifestly appear. For, whereas, in my time there were in the university of Oxford 30,000 students, now there are not to be found 6,000. The occasion of this great decay is to be ascribed to no other cause than the circumvention only of the friars above mentioned."

[84]

As the consequence of these very extraordinary practices of the friars, every branch of science and study was decaying in England.

[85] “For that these begging friars,” continues the archbishop, “through their privileges obtained of the Popes to preach, to hear confessions, and to bury, and through their charters of impropriations, did thereby grow to such great riches and possessions by their begging, craving, catching, and intermeddling with Church matters, that no book could stir of any science, either of divinity, law, or physic, but they were both able and ready to buy it up. So that every convent having a great library, full, stuffed, and furnished with all sorts of books, and being so many convents within the realm, and in every convent so many friars increasing daily more and more, by reason thereof it came to pass that very few books or none at all remain for other students.”

“He himself sent to the university four of his own priests or chaplains, who sent him word again that they neither could find the Bible, nor any other good profitable book of divinity profitable for their study, and so they returned to their own country.”²⁴

In vain had the archbishop undertaken his long journey. In vain had he urged these complaints before the Pontiff at Avignon. The Pope knew that these charges were but too well-founded; but what did that avail? The friars were indispensable to the Pope; they had been created by him, they were dependent upon him, they lived for him, they were his obsequious tools; and weighed against the services they were rendering to the Papal throne, the interests of literature in England were but as dust in the balance. Not a finger must be lifted to curtail the privileges or check the abuses of the Mendicants. The archbishop, finding that he had gone on a bootless errand, returned to England, and died three years after.

²⁴Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, bk. 5. See there the story of Armachanus and his oration against the friars.

Chapter 5: The Friars Versus the Gospel in England

The Joy of the Friars—Wicliffe Resumes the Battle—Demands the Abolition of the Orders—The Arrogance of the Friars—Their Luxury—Their Covetousness—Their Oppression of the Poor—The Agitation in England—Questions touching the Gospel raised thereby—Is it from the Friar or from Christ that Pardon is to be had?—Were Christ and the Apostles Mendicants?—Wicliffe’s Tractate, Objections to Friars—It launches him on his Career as a Reformer—Preaches in this Tractate the Gospel to England—Attack on the Power of the Keys—No Pardon but from God—Salvation without Money

The joy of the friars when they heard that their enemy was dead was great; but it was of short duration. The same year in which the archbishop died (1360) Wicliffe stood up and began that opposition to the Mendicants which he maintained more or less to the very close of his life. “John Wicliffe,” says an unknown writer, “the singular ornament of his time, began at Oxford in the year of our Lord 1360, in his public lectures, to correct the abuses of the clergy, and their open wickedness, King Edward III. being living, and continued secure a most valiant champion of the truth among the tyrants of Sodom.”¹

Wicliffe saw deeper into the evil than Armachanus had done. The very institution of the order was unscriptural and corrupt, and while it existed, nothing, he felt, but abuse could flow from it; and therefore, not content, as his predecessor would have been, with the reformation of the order, he demanded its abolition. The friars, vested in an independent jurisdiction by the Pope, were overriding the canons and regulations of Oxford, where their head-quarters were pitched; they were setting at defiance the laws of the State; they were inveigling young children into their “rotten habit;” they were perambulating the country; and while they would allow no one

¹MS. in Hyper. Bodl., 163; apud Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 9.

but themselves to preach, their sermons were made up, Wicliffe tells us, “of fables, chronicles of the world, and stories from the siege of Troy.”

[86] The Pope, moreover, had conferred on them the right of shriving men; and they performed their office with such a hearty good-will, and gave absolution on terms so easy, that malefactors of every description flocked to them for pardon, and the consequence was a frightful increase of immorality and crime.² The alms which ought to have been given to the “bed-rid, the feeble, the crooked,” they intercepted and devoured. In flagrant contempt of the declared intention of their founder, and their own vow of poverty, their hoards daily increased. The wealth thus gathered they expended in palatial buildings, in sumptuous tables, or other delights; or they sent it abroad to the impoverishing of the kingdom. Not the money only, but the secrets of the nation they were suspected of discovering to the enemies of the realm. To obey the Pope, to pray to St. Francis, to give alms to the friar, were the sum of all piety. This was better than all learning and all virtue, for it could open the gates of heaven. Wicliffe saw nothing in the future, provided the Mendicants were permitted to carry on their trade, but the speedy ruin of both Church and State.

The controversy on which Wicliffe now entered was eminently wholesome - wholesome to himself and to the nation. It touched the very foundations of Christianity, and compelled men to study the nature of the Gospel. The Mendicants went through England, selling to men the pardons of the Pope. Can our sins be forgiven for a little money? men were led to ask. Is it with Innocent or with God that we have to do? This led them to the Gospel, to learn from it the ground of the acceptance of sinners before God. Thus the controversy was no mere quarrel between the regulars and the seculars; it was no mere collision between the jurisdiction of the Oxford authorities and the jurisdiction of the Mendicants; the question was one between

²“I have in my diocese of Armagh,” says the Archbishop and Primate of Ireland, Armachanus, “about 2,000 persons, who stand condemned by the censures of the Church denounced every year against murderers, thieves, and such-like malefactors, of all which number scarce fourteen have applied to me or to my clergy for absolution; yet they all receive the Sacraments, as others do, because they are absolved, or pretend to be absolved, by friars.” (Fox, Acts and Mon.)

the Mendicants and the Gospel. Is it from the friars or from Jesus Christ that we are to obtain the forgiveness of our sins? This was a question which the England of that age eminently needed to have stirred.

The arguments, too, by which the friars endeavored to cover the lucrative trade they were driving, helped to import a salutary element into the controversy. They pleaded the sanction of the Savior for their begging. Christ and the apostles, said they, were mendicants, and lived on alms.³ This led men to look into the New Testament, to see if this really were so. The friars had made an unwitting appeal to the right of private judgment, and advertised a book about which, had they been wise for their own interests, they would have been profoundly silent. Wicliffe, especially, was led to the yet closer study of the Bible. The system of truth in Holy Scripture revealed itself more and more to him; he saw how widely the Church of Rome had departed from the Gospel of Christ, and what a gulf separated salvation by the blood of the Lamb from salvation by the pardons of the Pope. It was now that the Professor of Divinity in Oxford rose up into the Reformer of England - the great pioneer and founder of the Reformation of Christendom.

About this time he published his *Objections to Friars*, which fairly launched him on his career as a Reformer. In this tractate he charges the friars with "fifty heresies and errors, and many moe, if men wole seke them well out."⁴ Let us mark that in this tract the Reformer does not so much dispute with the friars as preach the Gospel to his countrymen. "There cometh," says Wicliffe, "no pardon but of God." "The worst abuses of these friars consist in their pretended confessions, by means of which they affect, with numberless artifices of blasphemy, to purify those whom they confess, and make them clear from all pollution in the eyes of God, setting aside the commandments and satisfaction of our Lord." "There is no greater heresy than for a man to believe that he is absolved from his sins if he give money, or if a priest lay his hand on this head, and say that he absolveth thee; for thou must be sorrowful in thy heart, and make amends to God, else God absolveth thee not." "Many think if they

³Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 2, p. 228.

⁴Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 22.

give a penny to a pardoner, they shall be forgiven the breaking of all the commandments of God, and therefore they take no heed how they keep them. But I say this for certain, though thou have priests and friars to sing for thee, and though thou, each day, hear many masses, and found churches and colleges, and go on pilgrimages all thy life, and give all thy goods to pardoners, this will not bring thy soul to heaven.” “May God of His endless mercy destroy the pride, covetousness, hypocrisy, and heresy of this reigned pardoning, and make men busy to keep His commandments, and to set fully their trust in Jesus Christ.”

[87] “I confess that the indulgences of the Pope, if they are what they are said to be, are a manifest blasphemy. The friars give a color to this blasphemy by saying that Christ is omnipotent, and that the Pope is His plenary vicar, and so possesses in everything the same power as Christ in His humanity. Against this rude blasphemy I have elsewhere inveighed. Neither the Pope nor the Lord Jesus Christ can grant dispensations or give indulgences to any man, except as the Deity has eternally determined by His just counsel.”⁵

Thus did John Wicliffe, with the instincts of a true Reformer, strike at that ghostly principle which serves the Pope as the foundation-stone of his kingdom. Luther’s first blows were in like manner aimed at the same principle. He began his career by throwing down the gauntlet to the pardon-mongers of Rome. It was “the power of the keys” which gave to the Pope the lordship of the conscience; for he who can pardon sin - open or shut the gate of Paradise - is God to men. Wicliffe perceived that he could not shake into ruin that great fabric of spiritual and temporal power which the Pontiffs had reared, and in which, as within a vast prison-house, they kept immured the souls and bodies of men, otherwise than by exploding the false dogma on which it was founded. It was this dogma therefore, first of all, which he challenged. Think not, said he, in effect, to his countrymen, that God has given “the keys” to Innocent of Rome; think not that the friar carries heaven in his wallet; think not that God sends his pardons wrapped up in those bits of paper which the Mendicants carry about with them, and which they sell for a piece

⁵See Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, chap. 2. Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*. Also Wicliffe and the Huguenots, by the Rev. Dr. Hanna, pp. 61 - 63; Edin. 1860.

of silver. Listen to the voice of the Gospel: “Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb without blemish and without spot.” God pardons men without money and without price. Thus did Wicliffe begin to preach “the acceptable year of the Lord,” and to proclaim “liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

Chapter 6: The Battle of the Parliament with the Pope

Resume of Political Progress—Foreign Ecclesiastics appointed to English Benefices—Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire meant to put an End to the Abuse—The Practice still Continued—Instances—Royal Commissioners sent to Treat with the Pope concerning this Abuse—Wicliffe chosen one of the Commissioners—The Negotiation a Failure—Nevertheless of Benefit to Wicliffe by the Insight it gave him into the Papacy—Arnold Garnier—The “Good Parliament”—Its Battle with the Pope—A Greater Victory than Crecy—Wicliffe waxes Bolder—Rage of the Monks

Picture: John of Gaunt

Picture: Altercation between John of Gaunt and the Bishop of London

We have already spoken of the encroachments of the Papal See on the independence of England in the thirteenth century; the cession of the kingdom to Innocent III. by King John; the promise of an annual payment to the Pope of a thousand marks by the English king; the demand preferred by Urban V. after payment of this tribute had lapsed for thirty-five years; the reply of the Parliament of England, and the share Wicliffe had in the resolution to which the Lords temporal and spiritual came to refuse the Papal impost. We have also said that the opposition of Parliament to the encroachments of the Popes on the liberties of the kingdom did not stop at this point, that several stringent laws were passed to protect the rights of the crown and the property of the subjects, and that more especially the Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire were framed with this view. The abuses which these laws were meant to correct had long been a source of national irritation. There were certain benefices in England which the Pope, in the plenitude of his power, reserved to himself. These were generally the more wealthy livings. But it might be

inconvenient to wait till a vacancy actually occurred, accordingly the Pope, by what he termed a *provisor*, issued an appointment beforehand. The rights of the chapter, or of the crown, or whoever was patron, were thus set aside, and the legal presentee must either buy up the provisor, or permit the Pope's nominee, often a foreigner, to enjoy the benefice. The very best of these dignities and benefices were enjoyed by Italians, Frenchmen, and other foreigners, who were, says Lewis, "some of them mere boys; and not only ignorant of the English language, but even of Latin, and who never so much as saw their churches, but committed the care of them to those they could get to serve them the cheapest; and had the revenues of them remitted to them at Rome or elsewhere, by their proctors, to whom they let their tithes."¹ It was to check this abuse that the Statute of Provisors was passed; and the law of Praemunire, by which it was followed, was intended to fortify it, and effectually to close the drain of the nation's wealth by forbidding any one to bring into the kingdom any bull or letter of the Pope appointing to an English benefice.

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The grievances were continued nevertheless, and became even more intolerable. The Parliament addressed a new remonstrance to the king, setting forth the unbearable nature of these oppressions, and the injury they were doing to the royal authority, and praying him to take action on the point. Accordingly, in 1373, the king appointed four commissioners to proceed to Avignon, where Pope Gregory XI. was residing, and laying the complaints of the English nation before him, request that for the future he would forbear meddling with the reservations of benefices. The ambassadors were courteously received, but they could obtain no redress.² The Parliament renewed their complaint and request that "remedy be provided against the provisions of the Pope, whereby he reaps the first fruits of ecclesiastical dignities, the treasure of the realm being thereby conveyed away, which they cannot bear." A Royal Commission was issued in 1374 to inquire into the number of ecclesiastical benefices and dignities in England held by aliens, and to estimate their exact value. It was found that the number of livings in the hands of Italians,

¹Lewis, Life of Wiclif, chap. 3, p. 31.

²Barnes, Life of King Edward III., p. 864. Lewis, Life of Wiclif, p. 32.

Frenchmen, and other foreigners was so great that, says Fox, “were it all set down, it would fill almost half a quire of paper.”³ The clergy of England was rapidly becoming an alien and a merely nominal one. The sums drained from the kingdom were immense.

The king resolved to make another attempt to arrange this matter with the Papal court. He named another commission, and it is an evidence of the growing influence of Wicliffe that his name stands second on the list of these delegates. The first named is John, Bishop of Bangor, who had served on the former commission; the second is John de Wicliffe, S.T.P. The names that follow are John Guter, Dean of Sechow; Simon de Moulton, LL.D.; William de Burton, Knight; Robert Bealknap, and John de Henyngton.⁴

The Pope declined receiving the king’s ambassadors at Avignon. The manners of the Papal court in that age could not bear close inspection. It was safer that foreign eyes should contemplate them from a distance. The Pope made choice of Bruges, in the Netherlands, and thither he sent his nuncios to confer with the English delegates.⁵ The negotiation dragged on for two years: the result was a compromise; the Pope engaging, on his part to desist from the reservation of benefices; and the king promising, on his, no more to confer them by his writ “quare impedit.” This arrangement left the power of the Pope over the benefices of the Church of England at least equal to that of the sovereign. The Pope did not renounce his right, he simply abstained from the exercise of it - tactics exceedingly common and very convenient in the Papal policy - and this was all that could be obtained from a negotiation of two years. The result satisfied no one in England: it was seen to be a hollow truce that could not last; nor indeed did it, for hardly had the commissioners returned home, when the Pope began to make as free with English benefices and their revenues as though he had never tied his hands by promise or treaty.⁶

³Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 561. Fox gives a list of the benefices, with the names of the incumbents and the worth of their sees. (See pp. 561, 562.)

⁴Barnes, *Life of King Edward III.*, p. 866. Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 33.

⁵Bruges was then a large city of 200,000 inhabitants, the seat of important industries, trade, wealth, municipal freedom, and political power.

⁶Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 34. Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol 1, pp. 326, 327.

There is cause, indeed, to suspect that the interests of England were betrayed in this negotiation. The Bishop of Bangor, on whom the conduct of the embassy chiefly devolved, on his return home was immediately translated to the See of Hereford, and in 1389 to that of St. David's. His promotion, in both instances the result of Papal provisors, bore the appearance of being the reward of subserviency. Wicliffe returned home in disgust at the time which had been wasted, and the little fruit which had been obtained. But these two years were to him far from lost years. Wicliffe had come into communication with the Italian, Spanish, and French dignitaries of the Church, who enjoyed the confidence of the Pope and the cardinals. There was given him an insight into a circle which would not have readily opened to his view in his own country. Other lessons too he had been learning, unpleasant no doubt, but most important. He had not been so far removed from the Papal court but he could see the principles that reigned there, and the motives that guided its policy. If he had not met the Pope he had met his representatives, and he had been able to read the master in his servants; and when he returned to England it was to proclaim on the house-tops what before he had spoken in the closet. Avarice, ambition, hypocrisy, these were the gods that were worshipped in the Roman curia - these were the virtues that adorned the Papal throne. So did Wicliffe proclaim. In his public lectures he now spoke of the Pope as "Antichrist, the proud worldly priest of Rome, and the most cursed of clippers and purse-kervers." And in one of his tracts that remain he thus speaks: - "They [the Pope and his collectors] draw out of our land poor men's livelihood, and many thousand marks by the year, of the king's money, for Sacraments and spiritual things, that is cursed heresy of simony, and maketh all Christendom assent and meyntene his heresy. And certes though our realm had a huge hill of gold, and never other man took thereof but only this proud worldly priest's collector, by process of time this hill must be spended; for he taketh ever money out of our land, and sendeth nought agen but God's curse for his simony."⁷ Soon after his return from Bruges, Wicliffe was appointed to the rectorship of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, and as this preferment came not from the Pope but the king, it may be taken as a sign of the royal approval

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⁷Great Sentence of Curse Expounded, 500:21; MSS. apud Lewis. Life of Wiclif.

of his conduct as a commissioner, and his growing influence at the court.

[90] The Parliament, finding that the negotiation at Bruges had come to nothing, resolved on more decisive measures. The Pope took advantage of the king's remissness in enforcing the statutes directed against the Papal encroachments, and promised many things, but performed nothing. He still continued to appoint aliens to English
[91] livings, notwithstanding his treaties to the contrary. If these usurpations were allowed, he would soon proceed to greater liberties, and would appoint to secular dignities also, and end by appropriating as his own the sovereignty of the realm. It was plain to the Parliament that a battle must be fought for the country's independence, and there were none but themselves to fight it. They drew up a bill of indictment against the Papal usurpations. In that document they set forth the manifold miseries under which the country was groaning from a foreign tyranny, which had crept into the kingdom under spiritual pretexts, but which was rapaciously consuming the fruits of the earth and the goods of the nation. The Parliament went on to say that the revenue drawn by the Pope from the realm was five times that which the king received; that he contrived to make one and the same dignity yield him six several taxes; that to increase his gains he frequently shifted bishops from one see to another; that he filled livings with ignorant and unworthy persons, while meritorious Englishmen were passed over, to the great discouragement of learning and virtue; that everything was venal in "the sinful city of Rome;" and that English patrons, corrupted by this pestilential example, had learned to practice simony without shame or remorse; that the Pope's collector had opened an establishment in the capital with a staff of officers, as if it were one of the great courts of the nation, "transporting yearly to the Pope twenty thousand marks, and most commonly more;" that the Pope received a richer revenue from England than any prince in Christendom drew from his kingdom; that this very year he had taken the first-fruits of all benefices; that he often imposed a special tax upon the clergy, which he sometimes expended in subsidizing the enemies of the country; that "God hath given His sheep to the Pope to be pastured, and not shorn and shaven;" that "therefore it would be good to renew all the statutes against provisions from Rome," and that "no Papal collector or proctor should remain in England,

upon pain of life and limb; and that no Englishman, on the like pain, should become such collector or proctor, or remain at the court of Rome.”⁸

In February, 1372, there appeared in England an agent of the Pope, named Arnold Garnier, who traveled with a suite of servants and six horses through England, and after remaining uninterruptedly two and a half years in the country, went back to Rome with no inconsiderable sum of money. He had a royal license to return to England, of which he afterwards made use. He was required to swear that in collecting the Papal dues he would protect the rights and interests of the crown and the country. He took the oath in 1372 in the Palace of Westminster, in presence of the councilors and dignitaries of the crown. The fears of patriots were in no way allayed by the ready oath of the Papal agent; and Wicliffe in especial wrote a treatise to show that he had sworn to do what was a contradiction and an impossibility.⁹

It was Wicliffe who breathed this spirit into the Commons of England, and emboldened them to fight this battle for the prerogatives of their prince, and their own rights as the free subjects of an independent realm. We recognize his graphic and trenchant style in the document of the Parliament. The Pope stormed when he found the gage of battle thrown down in this bold fashion. With an air of defiance he hastened to take it up, by appointing an Italian to an English benefice. But the Parliament stood firm; the temporal Lords sided with the Commons. “We will support the crown,” said they, “against the tiara.” The Lords spiritual adopted a like course; reserving their judgment on the ecclesiastical sentences of the Pope, they held that the temporal effects of his sentences were null, and that the Papal power availed nothing in that point against the royal prerogative.

The nation rallied in support of the Estates of the Realm. It pronounced no equivocal opinion when it styled the Parliament which had enacted these stringent edicts against the Papal bulls and agents “the Good Parliament.” The Pope languidly maintained the

⁸Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 561. Sir Robert Cotton’s *Abridgment*, p. 128. Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, pp. 34 - 37. Hume, *Edw. III.*, chap. 16.

⁹Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif; MSS.* in the Royal Library at Vienna, No. 1,337; vol. 1, p. 341.

conflict for a few years, but he was compelled ultimately to give way before the firm attitude of the nation. The statutes no longer remained a dead letter. They were enforced against every attempt to carry out the Papal appointments in England. Thus were the prerogatives of the sovereign and the independence of the country vindicated, and a victory achieved more truly valuable in itself, and more lasting in its consequences, than the renowned triumphs of Crecy and Poitiers, which rendered illustrious the same age and the same reign.

[92] This was the second great defeat which Rome had sustained. England had refused to be a fief of the Papal See by withholding the tribute to Urban; and now, by repelling the Pontifical jurisdiction, she claimed to be mistress in her own territory. The clergy divined the quarter whence these rebuffs proceeded. The real author of this movement, which was expanding every day, was at little pains to conceal himself. Ever since his return from Brages, Wicliffe had felt a new power in his soul, propelling him onward in this war. The unscriptural constitution and blasphemous assumptions of the Papacy had been more fully disclosed to him, and he began to oppose it with a boldness, an eloquence, and a force of argument which he had not till now been able to wield. Through many channels was he leavening the nation - his chair in Oxford; his pulpit in Lutterworth; the Parliament, whose debates and edicts he inspired; and the court, whose policy he partly molded. His sentiments were finding an echo in public opinion. The tide was rising. The hierarchy took the alarm. They cried for help, and the Pope espoused their cause, which was not theirs only, but his as well.

“The whole glut of monks or begging friars,” says Fox, “were set in a rage or madness, which (even as hornets with their stings) did assail this good man on every side, fighting (as is said) for their altars, paunches, and bellies. After them the priests, and then after them the archbishop took the matter in hand, being then Simon Sudbury.”¹⁰

¹⁰Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 556.

Chapter 7: Persecution of Wicliffe by the Pope and the Hierarchy

Wicliffe's Writings Examined—His Teaching submitted to the Pope—Three Bulls issued against him—Cited to appear before the Bishop of London—John of Gaunt Accompanies him—Portrait of Wicliffe before his Judges—Tumult—Altercation between Duke of Lancaster and Bishop of London—The Mob Rushes in—The Court Broken up—Death of Edward III—Meeting of Parliament—Wicliffe Summoned to its Councils—Question touching the Papal Revenue from English Sees submitted to him—Its Solution—England coming out of the House of Bondage

Picture: The Lollards Tower, Lambeth Palace

The man who was the mainspring of a movement so formidable to the Papacy must be struck down. The writings of Wicliffe were examined. It was no difficult matter to extract from his works doctrines which militated against the power and wealth of Rome. The Oxford professor had taught that the Pope has no more power than ordinary priests to excommunicate or absolve men; that neither bishop nor Pope can validly excommunicate any man, unless by sin he has first made himself obnoxious to God; that princes cannot give endowments in perpetuity to the Church; that when their gifts are abused they have the right to recall them; and that Christ has given no temporal lordship to the Popes, and no supremacy over kings. These propositions, culled from the tracts of the Reformer, were sent to Pope Gregory XI. ¹

These doctrines were found to be of peculiarly bad odor at the Papal court. They struck at a branch of the Pontifical prerogative on which the holders of the tiara have always put a special value. If the

¹Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 557. Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, pp.46 - 48. Wicliffe's adversaries sent nineteen articles enclosed in a letter to the Pope, extracted from his letters and sermons. See in Lewis the copy which Sir Henry Spelman has put in his collection of the English Councils.

world should come to be of Wicliffe's sentiments, farewell to the temporal power of the Popes, the better half of their kingdom. The matter portended a terrible disaster to Rome, unless prevented in time. For broaching a similar doctrine, Arnold of Brescia had done expiation amid the flames. Wicliffe had been too long neglected; he must be immediately attended to.

Three separate bulls were drafted on the same day, May 22nd, 1377,² and dispatched to England. These bulls hinted surprise at the supineness of the English clergy in not having ere now crushed this formidable heresy which was springing up on their soil, and they commanded them no longer to delay, but to take immediate steps for silencing the author of that heresy. One of the bulls was addressed to Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, and William Courtenay, Bishop of London; the second was addressed to the king, and the third to the University of Oxford. They were all of the same tenor. The one addressed to the king dwelt on the greatness of England, "as glorious in power and richness, but more illustrious for the piety of its faith, and for its using to shine with the brightness of the sacred page."³ The Scriptures had not yet been translated into the vernacular tongue, and the Papal compliment which turns on this point is scarcely intelligible.

The university was commanded to take care that tares did not spring up among its wheat, and that from its chairs propositions were not taught "detestable and damnable, tending to subvert the state of the whole Church, and even of the civil government." The bull addressed to the bishops was expressed in terms still more energetic. The Pope could not help wishing that the Rector of Lutterworth and Professor of Divinity "was not a master of errors, and had run into a kind of detestable wickedness, not only and openly publishing, but also vomiting out of the filthy dungeon of his breast divers professions, false and erroneous conclusions, and most wicked and damnable heresies, whereby he might defile the faithful sort, and bring them from the right path headlong into the way of perdition." They were therefore to apprehend the said John Wicliffe, to shut him up in prison, to send all proofs and evidence of his heresy to

²Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 49.

³*Ibid.*, p. 51.

the Pope, taking care that the document was securely sealed, and entrusted to a faithful messenger, and that meanwhile they should retain the prisoner in safe custody, and await further instructions. Thus did Pope Gregory throw the wolfs hide over Wicliffe, that he might let slip his Dominicans in full cry upon his track,⁴

The zeal of the bishops anticipated the orders of the Pope. Before the bulls had arrived in England the prosecution of Wicliffe was begun. At the instance of Courtenay, Bishop of London, Wicliffe was cited to appear on the 19th of February, 1377, in Our Lady's Chapel in St. Paul's, to answer for his teaching. The rumor of what was going on got wind in London, and when the day came a great crowd assembled at the door of St. Paul's. Wicliffe, attended by two powerful friends - John, Duke of Lancaster, better known as John of Gaunt, and Lord Percy, Earl Marshal of England - appeared at the skirts of the assemblage. The Duke of Lancaster and Wicliffe had first met, it is probable, at Bruges, where it chanced to both to be on a mission at the same time. Lancaster held the Reformer in high esteem, on political if not on religious grounds. Favoring his opinions, he resolved to go with him and show him countenance before the tribunal of the bishops. "Here stood Wicliffe in the presence of his judges, a meager form dressed in a long light mantle of black cloth, similar to those worn at this day by doctors, masters, and students in Cambridge and Oxford, with a girdle round the middle; his face, adorned with a long thick beard, showed sharp bold features, a clear piercing eye, firmly closed lips, which bespoke decision; his whole appearance full of great earnestness, significance, and character."⁵

But the three friends had found it no easy matter to elbow their way through the crowd. In forcing a passage something like an uproar took place, which scandalized the court. Percy was the first

⁴Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 563. Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, pp. 50, 51.

⁵Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 1, p. 370. In 1851 a remarkable portrait of Wicliffe came to light in possession of a family named Payne, in Leicester. It is a sort of palimpsest. The original painting of Wicliffe, which seems to have come down from the fifteenth century, had been painted over before the Reformation, and changed into the portrait of an unknown Dr. Robert Langton; the original was discovered beneath it, and this represents Wicliffe in somewhat earlier years, with fuller and stronger features than in the other and commonly known portraits. (*British Quarterly Review*, Oct., 1858.)

to make his way into the Chapel of Our Lady, where the clerical judges were assembled in their robes and insignia of office.

“Percy,” said Bishop Courtenay, sharply - more offended, it is probable, at seeing the humble Rector of Lutterworth so powerfully befriended, than at the tumult which their entrance had created - “if I had known what masteries you would have kept in the church, I would have stopped you from coming in hither.” “He shall keep such masteries,” said John of Gaunt, gruffly, “though you say nay.”

“Sit down, Wicliffe,” said Percy, having but scant reverence for a court which owed its authority to a foreign power - “sit down; you have many things to answer to, and have need to repose yourself on a soft seat.”

“He must and shall stand,” said Courtenay, still more chafed; “it is unreasonable that one on his trial before his ordinary should sit.”

“Lord Percy’s proposal is but reasonable,” interposed the Duke of Lancaster; “and as for you,” said he, addressing Bishop Courtenay, “who are grown so arrogant and proud, I will bring down the pride not of you alone, but that of all the prelacy in England.”

To this menace the bishop calmly replied “that his trust was in no friend on earth, but in God.” This answer but the more inflamed the anger of the duke, and the altercation became yet warmer, till at last John of Gaunt was heard to say that “rather than take such words from the bishop, he would drag him out of the court by the hair of the head.”

[94] It is hard to say what the strife between the duke and the bishop might have grown to, had not other parties suddenly appeared upon the scene. The crowd at the door, hearing what was going on within, burst the barrier, and precipitated itself en masse into the chapel. The angry contention between Lancaster and Courtenay was instantly drowned by the louder clamors of the mob. All was now confusion and uproar. The bishops had pictured to themselves the humble Rector of Lutterworth standing meekly if not tremblingly at their bar. It was their turn to tremble. Their citation, like a dangerous spell which recoils upon the man who uses it, had evoked a tempest which all their art and authority were not able to allay. To proceed with the trial was out of the question. The bishops hastily retreated; Wicliffe

returned home; "and so," says one, "that council, being broken up with scolding and brawling, was dissolved before nine o'clock."⁶

The issues of the affair were favorable to the Reformation. The hierarchy had received a check, and the cause of Wicliffe began to be more widely discussed and better understood by the nation. At this juncture events happened in high places which tended to shield the Reformer and his opinions. Edward III., who had reigned with glory, but lived too long for his fame, now died (June 21st, 1377). His yet more renowned son, the Black Prince, had preceded him to the grave, leaving as heir to the throne a child of eleven years, who succeeded on his grandfather's death, under the title of Richard II. His mother, the dowager Princess of Wales, was a woman of spirit, friendly to the sentiments of Wicliffe, and not afraid, as we shall see, to avow them. The new sovereign, two months after his accession, assembled his first Parliament. It was composed of nearly the same men as the "Good Parliament" which had passed such stringent edicts against the "provisions" and other usurpations of the Pope. The new Parliament was disposed to carry the war against the Papacy a step farther than its predecessor had done. It summoned Wicliffe to its councils. His influence was plainly growing. The trusted commissioner of princes, the counsellor of Parliaments, he had become a power in England. We do not wonder that the Pope singled him out as the man to be struck down.

While the bulls which were meant to crush the Reformer were still on their way to England, the Parliament unequivocally showed the confidence it had in his wisdom and integrity, by submitting the following question to him: "Whether the Kingdom of England might not lawfully, in case of necessity, detain and keep back the treasure of the Kingdom for its defense, that it be not carried away to foreign and strange nations, the Pope himself demanding and requiring the same, under pain of censure."

This appears a very plain matter to us, but our ancestors of the fourteenth century found it encompassed with great difficulties. The best and bravest of England at that day were scared by the ghostly threat with which the Pope accompanied his demand, and they durst

⁶Fox, *Acts and Mon.* Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, pp. 56 - 58. Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 1, pp. 338, 339. Hanna, *Wicliffe and the Huguenots*, p. 83. Hume, *Rich. II.*, *Miscell. Trans.*

not refuse it till assured by Wicliffe that it was a matter in which the Pope had no right to command, and in which they incurred no sin and no danger by disobedience. Nothing could better show the thralldom in which our fathers were held, and the slow and laborious steps by which they found their way out of the house of their bondage.

But out of what matter did the question now put to Wicliffe arise? It related to an affair which must have been peculiarly irritating to Englishmen. The Popes were then enduring their “Babylonish captivity,” as they called their residence at Avignon. All through the reign of Edward III., the Papacy, banished from Rome, had made its abode on the banks of the Rhone. One result of this was that each time the Papal chair became vacant it was filled with a Frenchman. The sympathies of the French Pope were, of course, with his native country, in the war now waging between France and England, and it was natural to suppose that part at least of the treasure which the Popes received from England went to the support of the war on the French side. Not only was the country drained of its wealth, but that wealth was turned against the country from which it was taken. Should this be longer endured? It was generally believed that at that moment the Pope’s collectors had a large sum in their hands ready to send to Avignon, to be employed, like that sent already to the same quarter, in paying soldiers to fight against England. Had they not better keep this gold at home? Wicliffe’s reply was in the affirmative, and the grounds of his opinion were briefly and plainly stated. He did not argue the point on the canon law, or on the law of England, but on that of nature and the Bible. God, he said, had given to every society the power of self-preservation; and any power given by God to any society or nation may, without doubt, be used for the end for which it was given. This gold was England’s own, and might unquestionably be retained for England’s use and defense. But it might be objected, Was not the Pope, as God’s vice-regent, supreme proprietor of all the temporalities, of all the sees and religious corporations in Christendom? It was on the ground of his temporal supremacy that he demanded this money, and challenged England at its peril to retain it. But who, replied the Reformer, gave the Pope this temporal supremacy? I do not find it in the Bible. The Apostle Peter could give the Pope only what he himself possessed, and Peter possessed no temporal lordship.

The Pope, argued Wicliffe, must choose between the apostleship and the kingship; if he prefers to be a king, then he can claim nothing of us in the character of an apostle; or should he abide by his apostleship, even then he cannot claim this money, for neither Peter nor any one of the apostles ever imposed a tax upon Christians; they were supported by the free-will offerings of those to whom they ministered. What England gave to the Papacy she gave not as a tribute, but as alms. But alms could not be righteously demanded unless when the claimant was necessitous. Was the Papacy so? Were not its coffers overflowing? Was not England the poorer of the two? Her necessities were great, occasioned by a two-fold drain, the exactions of the Popes and the burdens of the war. Let charity, then, begin at home, and let England, instead of sending her money to these poor men of Avignon, who are clothed in purple and fare sumptuously every day, keep her own gold for her own uses. Thus did the Reformer lead on his countrymen, step by step, as they were able to follow.

Chapter 8: Hierarchical Persecution of Wicliffe Resumed

Arrival of the Three Bulls—Wicliffe’s Anti-Papal Policy—Entirely
Subversive of Romanism—New Citation—Appears before the
Bishops at Lambeth—The Crowd—Its Reverent Behavior to
Wicliffe—Message from the Queen—Dowager to the
Court—Dismay of the Bishops—They abruptly Terminate the
Sitting—English Tumults in the Fourteenth Century compared with
French Revolutions in the Nineteenth—Substance of Wicliffe’s
Defense—The Binding and Loosing Power

Picture: Popular Demonstration at Lambeth Palace in favor of Wicliffe

Meanwhile, the three bulls of the Pope had arrived in England. The one addressed to the king found Edward in his grave. That sent to the university was but coldly welcomed. Not in vain had Wicliffe taught so many years in its halls. Oxford, moreover, had too great a regard for its own fame to extinguish the brightest luminary it contained. But the bull addressed to the bishops found them in a different mood. Alarm and rage possessed these prelates. Mainly by the instrumentality of Wicliffe had England been rescued from sheer vassalage to the Papal See. It was he, too, who had put an extinguisher upon the Papal nominations, thereby vindicating the independence of the English Church. He had next defended the right of the nation to dispose of its own property, in defiance of the ghostly terrors by which the Popes strove to divert it into their own coffers. Thus, guided by his counsel, and fortified by the sanction of his name, the Parliament was marching on and adopting one bold measure after another. The penetrating genius of the man, his sterling uprightness, his cool, cautious, yet fearless courage, made the humble Rector of Lutterworth a formidable antagonist. Besides, his deep insight into the Papal system enabled him to lead the Parliament and nation of England, so that they were being

drawn on unawares to deny not merely the temporal claims, but the spiritual authority also of Rome. The acts of resistance which had been offered to the Papal power were ostensibly limited to the political sphere, but they were done on principles which impinged on the spiritual authority, and could have no other issue than the total overthrow of the whole fabric of the Roman power in England. This was what the hierarchy foresaw; the arrival of the Papal bulls, therefore, was hailed by them with delight, and they lost no time in acting upon them.

The primate summoned Wicliffe to appear before him in April, 1378. The court was to sit in the archbishop's chapel at Lambeth. The substance of the Papal bulls on which the prelates acted we have given in the preceding chapter. Following in the steps of condemned heresiarchs of ancient times, Wicliffe (said the Papal missive) had not only revived their errors, but had added new ones of his own, and was to be dealt with as men deal with a "common thief." The latter injunction the prelates judged it prudent not to obey. It might be safe enough to issue such an order at Avignon, or at Rome, but not quite so safe to attempt to execute it in England. The friends of the Reformer, embracing all ranks from the prince downward, were now too numerous to see with unconcern Wicliffe seized and incarcerated as an ordinary caitiff. The prelates, therefore, were content to cite him before them, in the hope that this would lead, in regular course, to the dungeon in which they wished to see him immured. When the day came, a crowd quite as great as and more friendly to the Reformer than that which besieged the doors of St. Paul's on occasion of his first appearance, surrounded the Palace of Lambeth, on the right bank of the Thames, opposite Westminster, where several councils had been held since the times of Anselm of Canterbury. Wicliffe now stood high in popular favor as a patriot, although his claims as a theologian and Reformer were not yet acknowledged, or indeed understood. Hence this popular demonstration in his favor.

To the primate this concourse gave anything but an assuring augury of a quiet termination to the trial. But Sudbury had gone too far to retreat. Wicliffe presented himself, but this time no John Gaunt was by his side. The controversy was now passing out of the political into the spiritual sphere, where the stout and valorous baron,

having a salutary dread of heresy, and especially of the penalties thereunto annexed, feared to follow. God was training His servant to walk alone, or rather to lean only upon Himself. But at the gates of Lambeth, Wicliffe saw enough to convince him that if the barons were forsaking him, the people were coming to his side. The crowd opened reverently to permit him to pass in, and the citizens, pressing in after him, filled the chapel, and testified, by gestures and speeches more energetic than courtly, their adherence to the cause, and their determination to stand by its champion. It seemed as if every citation of Wicliffe was destined to evoke a tempest around the judgment-seat. The primate and his peers were consulting how they might eject or silence the intruders, when a messenger entered, who added to their consternation. This was Sir Lewis Clifford, who had been dispatched by the queen-mother to forbid the bishops passing sentence upon the Reformer. The dismay of the prelates was complete, and the proceedings were instantly stopped. "At the wind of a reed shaken," says Walsingham, who describes the scene, "their speech became as soft as oil, to the public loss of their own dignity, and the damage of the whole Church. They were struck with such a dread, that you would think them to be as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."¹ The only calm and self-possessed man in all that assembly was Wicliffe. A second time he returned unhurt and uncondemned from the tribunal of his powerful enemies. He had been snatched up and carried away, as it were, by a whirlwind.

A formidable list of charges had been handed to Wicliffe along with his citation. It were tedious to enumerate these; nor is it necessary to go with any minuteness into the specific replies which he had prepared, and was about to read before the court when the storm broke over it, which brought its proceedings so abruptly to a close. But the substance of his defense it is important to note, because it enables us to measure the progress of the Reformer's own emancipation: and the stages of Wicliffe's enlightenment are just the stages of the Reformation. We now stand beside the cradle of Protestantism in England, and we behold the nation, roused from its deep sleep by the Reformer's voice, making its first essay to find

¹Walsingham, *Hist. Anglioe*, p. 205.

the road of liberty. If a little noise accompanies these efforts, if crowds assemble, and raise fanatical cries, and scare prelates on the judgment-seat, this rudeness must be laid at the door of those who had withheld that instruction which would have taught the people to reform religion without violating the laws, and to utter their condemnation of falsehoods without indulging their passions against persons. Would it have been better that England should have lain still in her chains, than that she should disturb the repose of dignified ecclesiastics by her efforts to break them? There may be some who would have preferred the torpor of slavery. But, after all, how harmless the tumults which accompanied the awakening of the English people in the fourteenth century, compared with the tragedies, the revolutions, the massacres, and the wars, amid which we have seen nations since - which slept on while England awoke - inaugurate their liberties! ²

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The paper handed in by Wicliffe to his judges, stripped of its scholastic form - for after the manner of the schools it begins with a few axioms, runs out in numerous divisions, and reaches its conclusions through a long series of nice disquisitions and distinctions - is in substance as follows: - That the Popes have no political dominion, and that their kingdom is one of a spiritual sort only; that their spiritual authority is not absolute, so as that they may be judged of none but God; on the contrary, the Pope may fall into sin like other men, and when he does so he ought to be reprov'd, and brought back to the path of duty by his cardinals; and if they are remiss in calling him to account, the inferior clergy and even the laity "may medicinally reprove him and implead him, and reduce him to lead a better life;" that the Pope has no supremacy over the temporal possessions of the clergy and the religious houses, in which some priests have vested him, the better to evade the taxes and burdens which their sovereign for the necessities of the State imposes upon their temporalities;

²"His [Wicliffe's] exertions," says Mr. Sharon Turner, "were of a value that has been always highly rated, but which the late events of European history considerably enhance, by showing how much the chances are against such a character arising. Many can demolish the superstructure, but where is the skill and the desire to rebuild a nobler fabric? When such men as Wicliffe, Huss, or Luther appear, they preserve society from darkness and depravity; and happy would it be for the peace of European society, if either France, Spain, or Italy

that no priest is at liberty to enforce temporal demands by spiritual censures; that the power of the priest in absolving or condemning is purely ministerial; that absolution will profit no one unless along with it there comes the pardon of God, nor will excommunication hurt any one unless by sin he has exposed himself to the anger of the great Judge. ³

This last is a point on which Wicliffe often insists; it goes very deep, striking as it does at one of the main pillars on which the Pope's kingdom stands, and plucking from his grasp that terrible trident which enables him to govern the world - the power of anathema. On this important point, "the power of the keys," as it has been technically designated, the sum of what Wicliffe taught is expressed in his fourteenth article. "We ought," says he, "to believe that then only does a Christian priest bind or loose, when he simply obeys the law of Christ; because it is not lawful for him to bind or loose but in virtue of that law, and by consequence not unless it be in conformity to it." ⁴

Could Wicliffe have dispelled the belief in the Pope's binding and loosing power, he would have completely rent the fetters which enchained the conscience of his nation. Knowing that the better half of his country's slavery lay in the thralldom of its conscience, Wicliffe, in setting free its soul, would virtually, by a single stroke, have achieved the emancipation of England.

³Walsingham, *Hist. Anglioe*, pp. 206 - 208. Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, chap. 4.

⁴Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, chap. 4, pp. 70 - 75.

Chapter 9: Wicliffe's Views on Church Property and Church Reform

An Eternal Inheritance—Overgrown Riches—Mortmain—Its Ruinous Effects—These Pictured and Denounced by Wicliffe—His Doctrine touching Ecclesiastical Property—Tithes—Novelty of his Views—His Plan of Reform—How he Proposed to Carry it out—Rome a Market—Wicliffe's Independence and Courage—His Plan substantially Proposed in Parliament after his Death—Advance of England—Her Exodus from the Prisonhouse—Sublimity of the Spectacle—Ode of Celebration

Picture: Avignon, a sometime Residence of the Popes

Picture: Wicliffe and the Monks: Scene in the Bedchamber

There was another matter to which Wicliffe often returned, because he held it as second only in importance to “the power of the keys.” This was the property of the Church. The Church was already not only enormously rich, but she had even proclaimed a dogma which was an effectual preventive against that wealth ever being less by so much as a single penny; nay, which secured that her accumulations should go on while the world stood. What is given to the Church, said the canon law, is given to God; it is a devoted thing, consecrated and set apart for ever to a holy use, and never can it be employed for any secular or worldly end whatever; and he who shall withdraw any part thereof from the Church robs God, and commits the awful sin of sacrilege. Over the man, whoever he might be, whether temporal baron or spiritual dignitary, who should presume to subtract so much as a single acre from her domains or a single penny from her coffers, the canon law suspended a curse. This wealth could not even be recovered: it was the Church's sole, absolute, and eternal inheritance. [99]

This grievance was aggravated by the circumstance that these large possessions were exempt from taxes and public burdens. The clergy kept no connection with the country farther than to prey on it.

The third Council of the Lateran forbade all laics, under the usual penalties, to exact any taxes from the clergy, or lay any contributions upon them or upon their Churches. ¹ If, however, the necessities of the State were great, and the lands of the laity insufficient, the priests might, of their own good pleasure, grant a voluntary subsidy. The fourth General Council of Lateran renewed this canon, hurling excommunication against all who should disregard it, but graciously permitting the clergy to aid in the exigencies of the State if they saw fit and the Pope were willing. ² Here was “a kingdom of priests,” the owners of half the soil, every inch of which was enclosed within a sacred rail, so that no one durst lay a finger upon it, unless indeed their foreign head, the Pontiff, should first give his consent.

In these overgrown riches Wicliffe discerned the source of innumerable evils. The nation was being beggared and the Government was being weakened. The lands of the Church were continually growing wider, and the area which supported the burdens of the State and furnished the revenues of the Crown was constantly growing narrower. Nor was the possession of this wealth less hurtful to the corporation that owned it, than its abstraction was to that from whom it had been torn. Whence flowed the many corruptions of the Church, the pride, the luxury, the indolence of Churchmen? Manifestly, from these enormous riches. Sacred uses! So was it pleaded. The more that wealth increased, the less sacred the uses to which it was devoted, and the more flagrant the neglect of the duties which those who possessed it were appointed to discharge.

But Wicliffe’s own words will best convey to us an idea of his feelings on this point, and the height to which the evil had grown.

“Prelates and priests,” says he, “cry aloud and write that the king hath no jurisdiction or power over the persons and goods of Holy Church. And when the king and the secular Lords, perceiving that their ancestors’ alms are wasted in pomp and pride, gluttony and other vanities, wish to take again the superfluity of temporal goods, and to help the land and themselves and their tenants, these worldly clerks bawl loudly that they ought to be cursed for intromitting with

¹Concil. Lateran. 3, cap. 19 - Hard., tom. 6, part 2, col. 1681.

²Hard., tom 7, col. 51. Vide Decret. Gregory IX., lib. 3.

the goods of Holy Church, as if secular Lords and Commons were no part of Holy Church.”

And again he complains that property which was not too holy to be spent in “gluttony and other vanities,” was yet accounted too holy to bear the burdens of the State, and contribute to the defense of the realm.

“By their new law of decretals,” says he, “they have ordained that our clergy shall pay no subsidy nor tax for keeping of our king and realm, without leave and assent of the worldly priest of Rome. And yet many times this proud worldly priest is an enemy of our land,

and secretly maintains our enemies in war against us with our own gold. And thus they make an alien priest, and he the proudest of all priests, to be the chief lord of the whole of the goods which clerks possess in the realm, and that is the greatest part thereof.”³

Wicliffe was not a mere corrector of abuses; he was a reformer of institutions, and accordingly he laid down a principle which menaced the very foundations of this great evil.

Those acres, now covering half the face of England, those cathedral and conventual buildings, those tithes and revenues which constitute the “goods” of the Church are not, Wicliffe affirmed, in any legal or strict sense the Church’s property. She neither bought it, nor did she win it by service in the field, nor did she receive it as a feudal, unconditional gift. It is the alms of the English nation. The Church is but the administrator of this property; the nation is the real proprietor, and the nation is bound through the king and Parliament, its representatives, to see that the Church devotes this wealth to the objects for which it was given to her; and if it shall find that it is abused or diverted to other objects, it may recall it. The ecclesiastic who becomes immoral and fails to fulfill the duties of his office, forfeits that office with all its temporalities, and the same law which applies to the individual applies to the whole corporation or Church. Such, in brief, was the doctrine of Wicliffe.⁴

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³See “Opinions of Wicliffe” in Vaughan, *Life of Wicliffe*. vol. 2, p. 267.

⁴See 6th, 16th, and 17th articles of defense as given in Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, chap. 4, compared with the articles of impeachment in the Pope’s bull. Sir James Macintosh, in his eloquent work *Vindicioe Gallicoe*, claims credit for the philosophic statesman Turgot as the first to deliver this theory of Church-lands in the article “Fondation” in the

But further, the Reformer distinguished between the lands of the abbacy or the monastery, and the acres of the neighboring baron. The first were national property, the second were private; the first were held for spiritual uses, the second for secular; and by how much the issues depending on the right use of the first, as regarded both the temporal and eternal interests of mankind, exceeded those depending upon the right use of the second, by so much was the nation bound closely to oversee, and jealously to guard against all perversion and abuse in the case of the former. The baron might feast, hunt, and ride out attended by ever so many men-at-arms; he might pass his days in labor or in idleness, just as suited him. But the bishop must eschew these delights and worldly vanities. He must give himself to reading, to prayer, to the ministry of the Word; he must instruct the ignorant, and visit the sick, and approve himself in all things as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ.⁵

But while Wicliffe made this most important distinction between ecclesiastical and lay property, he held that as regarded the imposts of the king, the estates of the bishop and the estates of the baron were on a level. The sovereign had as good a right to tax the one as the other, and both were equally bound to bear their fair share of the expense of defending the country. Further, Wicliffe held the decision of the king, in all questions touching ecclesiastical property, to be final. And let no one, said the Reformer in effect, be afraid to embrace these opinions, or be deterred from acting on them, by terror of the Papal censures. The spiritual thunder hurts no one whose cause is good.

Even tithes could not now be claimed, Wicliffe held, on a Divine authority. The tenth of all that the soil yielded was, by God's command, set apart for the support of the Church under the economy of Moses. But that enactment, the Reformer taught, was no longer binding. The "ritual" and the "polity" of that dispensation had passed away, and only the "moral" remained. And that "moral" Wicliffe summed up in the words of the apostle, "Let him that is taught in the word minister to him that teacheth in all good things." And while strenuously insisting on the duty of the instructed to provide for their

Encyclopedie. It was propounded by Wicliffe four centuries before Turgot flourished. (See *Vind. Gall.*, p. 85; Lond., 1791.)

⁵Treatise on Clerks and Possessioners.

spiritual teachers, he did not hesitate to avow that where the priest notoriously failed in his office the people were under no obligation to support him; and if he should seek by the promise of Paradise, or the threat of anathema, to extort a livelihood, for work which he did not do and from men whom he never taught, they were to hold the promise and the threat as alike empty and futile. "True men say," wrote Wicliffe, "that prelates are more bound to preach truly the Gospel than their subjects are to pay them dymes [tithes]; for God chargeth that more, and it is more profitable to both parties. Prelates, therefore, are more accursed who cease from their preaching than are their subjects who cease to pay tithes, even while their prelates do their office well." ⁶

These were novel and startling opinions in the age of Wicliffe. It required no ordinary independence of mind to embrace such views. They were at war with the maxims of the age; they were opposed to the opinions on which Churches and States had acted for a thousand years; and they went to the razing of the whole ecclesiastical settlement of Christendom. If they were to be applied, all existing religious institutions must be remodeled. But if true, why should they not be carried out? Wicliffe did not shrink from even this responsibility.

He proposed, and not only did he propose, he earnestly pleaded with the king and Parliament, that the whole ecclesiastical estate should be reformed in accordance with the principles he had enunciated. Let the Church surrender all her possessions - her broad acres, her palatial building, her tithes, her multiform dues - and return to the simplicity of her early days, and depend only on the free-will offerings of the people, as did the apostles and first preachers of the Gospel. Such was the plan Wicliffe laid before the men of the fourteenth century. ⁷ We may well imagine the amazement with which he was listened to.

Did Wicliffe really indulge the hope that his scheme would be carried into effect? Did he really think that powerful abbots and wealthy prelates would sacrifice their principalities, their estates and honors, at the call of duty, and exchanging riches for dependence,

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⁶MS. of Prelates; apud Vaughan, vol. 2, p. 286.

⁷MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded; apud Vaughan, vol. 2, p. 289.

and luxurious ease for labor, go forth to instruct the poor and ignorant as humble ministers of the Gospel? There was not faith in the world for such an act of self-denial. Had it been realized, it would have been one of the most marvelous things in all history. Nor did Wicliffe himself expect it to happen. He knew too well the ecclesiastics of his time, and the avarice and pride that animated them, from their head at Avignon down to the bare-footed mendicant of England, to look for such a miracle. But his duty was not to be measured by his chance of success. Reform was needed; it must be attempted if Church and State were to be saved, and here was the reform which stood enjoined, as he believed, in the Scriptures, and which the example of Christ and His apostles confirmed and sanctioned; and though it was a sweeping and comprehensive one, reversing the practice of a thousand years, condemning the maxims of past ages, and necessarily provoking the hostility of the wealthiest and most powerful body in Christendom, yet he believed it to be practicable if men had only virtue and courage enough.

Above all, he believed it to be sound, and the only reform that would meet the evil; and therefore, though princes were forsaking him, and Popes were fulminating against him, and bishops were summoning him to their bar, he fearlessly did his duty by displaying his plan of reform in all its breadth before the eyes of the nation, and laying it at the foot of the throne.

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But Wicliffe, a man of action as well as of thought, did not aim at carrying this revolution by a stroke. All great changes, he knew, must proceed gradually. What he proposed was that as benefices fell vacant, the new appointments should convey no right to the temporalities, and thus in a short time, without injury or hardship to any one, the whole face of England would be changed. "It is well known," says he, "that the King of England, in virtue of his regalia, on the death of a bishop or abbot, or any one possessing large endowments, takes possession of these endowments as the sovereign, and that a new election is not entered upon without a new assent; nor will the temporalities in such a case pass from their last occupant to his successor without that assent. Let the king, therefore, refuse to continue what has been the great delinquency of his predecessors, and in a short time the whole kingdom will be freed from the mischiefs which have flowed from this source."

It may perhaps be objected that thus to deprive the Church of her property was to injure vitally the interests of religion and civilization. With the abstract question we have here nothing to do; let us look at the matter practically, and as it must have presented itself to Wicliffe. The withdrawal of the Church's property from the service of religion was already all but complete. So far as concerned the religious instruction and the spiritual interests of the nation, this wealth profited about as little as if it did not exist at all. It served but to maintain the pomps of the higher clergy, and the excesses which reigned in the religious houses. The question then, practically, was not, Shall this property be withdrawn from religious uses? but, Shall it be withdrawn from its actual uses, which certainly are not religious, and be devoted to other objects more profitable to the commonwealth? On that point Wicliffe had a clear opinion; he saw a better way of supporting the clergy, and he could not, he thought, devise a worse than the existing one. "It is thus," he says, "that the wretched beings of this world are estranged from faith, and hope, and charity, and become corrupt in heresy and blasphemy, even worse than heathens. Thus it is that a clerk, a mere collector of pence, who can neither read nor understand a verse in his psalter, nor repeat the commandments of God, bringeth forth a bull of lead, testifying in opposition to the doom of God, and of manifest experience, that he is able to govern many souls. And to act upon this false bull he will incur costs and labor, and often fight, and get fees, and give much gold out of our land to aliens and enemies; and many are thereby slaughtered by the hand of our enemies, to their comfort and our confusion."⁸

Elsewhere he describes Rome as a market, where the cure of souls was openly sold, and where the man who offered the highest price got the fattest benefice. In that market, virtue, piety, learning were nought. The only coin current was gold. But the men who trafficked there, and came back invested with a spiritual office, he thus describes: "As much, therefore, as God's Word, and the bliss of heaven in the souls of men, are better than earthly goods, so much are these worldly prelates, who withdraw the great debt of

⁸MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded; apud Vaughan, *Life of Wicliffe*, vol. 2, p. 306.

holy teaching, worse than thieves; more accursedly sacrilegious than ordinary plunderers, who break into churches, and steal thence chalices, and vestments, and never so much gold.”⁹

Whatever may be the reader’s judgment of the sentiments of Wicliffe on this point, there can be but one opinion touching his independence of mind, and his fidelity to what he believed to be the truth. Looking back on history, and looking around in the world, he could see only a unanimous dissent from his doctrine. All the ages were against him; all the institutions of Christendom were against him. The Bible only, he believed, was with him. Supported by it, he bravely held and avowed his opinion. His peril was great, for he had made the whole hierarchy of Christendom his enemy. He had specially provoked the wrath of that spiritual potentate whom few kings in that age could brave with impunity. But he saw by faith Him who is invisible, and therefore he feared not Gregory. The evil this wealth was doing, the disorders and weakness with which it was afflicting the State, the immorality and ignorance with which it was corrupting society, and the eternal ruin in which it was plunging the souls of men, deeply affected him; and though the riches which he so earnestly entreated men to surrender had been a million of times more than they were, they would have been in his account but as dust in the balance compared with the infinite damage which it cost to keep them, and the infinite good which would be reaped by parting with them.

[104] Nor even to the men of his own time did the measure of the Reformer seem so very extravagant. Doubtless the mere mention of it took away the breath from those who had touched this gold; but the more sober and thoughtful in the nation began to see that it was not so impracticable as it looked, and that instead of involving the destruction it was more likely to be the saving of the institutions of learning and religion. About twenty-four years after the Reformer’s death, a great measure of Church reform, based on the views of Wicliffe, was proposed by the Commons. The plan took shape in a petition which Parliament presented to the king, and which was to the following effect: - That the crown should take possession of all the property of the Church; that it should appoint a body of clergy,

⁹Ibid., chap. 14.

fifteen thousand in number, for the religious service of the kingdom; that it should assign an annual stipend to each; and that the surplus of the ecclesiastical property should be devoted to a variety of State purposes, of which the building and support of almshouses was one.
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Those who had the power could not or would not see the wisdom of the Reformer. Those who did see it had not the power to act upon it, and so the wealth of the Church remained untouched; and, remaining untouched, it continued to grow, and along with it all the evils it engendered, till at last these were no longer bearable. Then even Popish governments recognized the wisdom of Wicliffe's words, and began to act upon his plan. In Germany, under the treaty of Westphalia, in Holland, in our own country, many of the richest benefices were secularized. When, at a later period, most of the Catholic monarchies suppressed the Jesuits, the wealth of that opulent body was seized by the sovereign. In these memorable examples we discover no trace of property, but simply the resumption by the State of the salaries of its public servants, when it deemed their services or the mode of them no longer useful.

These examples are the best testimony to the substantial soundness of Wicliffe's views; and the more we contemplate the times in which he formed them, the more are we amazed at the sagacity, the comprehensiveness, the courage, and the faith of the Reformer.

In these events we contemplate the march of England out of the house of her bondage. Wicliffe is the one and only leader in this glorious exodus. No Aaron marches by the side of this Moses. But the nation follows its heroic guide, and steadfastly pursues the sublime path of its emancipation. Every year places a greater distance between it and the slavery it is leaving, and brings it nearer the liberty that lies before it. What a change since the days of King John! Then Innocent III. stood with his heel on the country. England was his humble vassal, fain to buy off his interdicts and curses with its gold, and to bow down even to the dust before his legates; but now, thanks to John Wicliffe, England stands erect, and meets the haughty Pontiff on at least equal terms.

¹⁰Walsingham. Hume, *Hist. of England*, chap. 18, pp. 366, 367. Cobbett, *Parliament. Hist. of England*, vol. 1, pp. 295. 296.

And what a fine logical sequence is seen running through the process of the emancipation of the country! The first step was to cast off its political vassalage to the Papal chair; the second was to vindicate the independence of its Church against her who haughtily styles herself the “Mother and Mistress of all Churches;” the third was to make good the sole and unchallenged use of its own property, by forbidding the gold of the nation to be carried across the sea for the use of the country’s foes. And now another step forward is taken. A proposal is heard to abate the power of superstition within the realm, by curtailing its overgrown resources, heedless of the cry of sacrilege, the only weapon by which the Church attempted to protect the wealth that had been acquired by means not the most honorable, and which was now devoted to ends not the most useful.

England is the first of the European communities to flee from that prison-house in which the Crowned Priest of the Seven Hills had shut up the nations. That cruel taskmaster had decreed an utter and eternal extinction of all national independence and of all human rights. But He who “openeth the eyes of the blind,” and “raiseth them that are bowed down,” had pity on those whom their oppressor had destined to endless captivity, and opened their prison-doors. We celebrate in songs the Exodus of early times. We magnify the might of that Hand and the strength of that Arm which broke the power of Pharaoh; which “opened the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder;” which divided the sea, and led the marshalled hosts of the Hebrews out of bondage. Here is the reality of which the other was but the figure. England comes forth, the first of the nations, led on by Wicliffe, and giving assurance to the world by her reappearance that all the captive nationalities which have shared her bondage shall, each in its appointed season, share her deliverance.

Rightly understood, is there in all history a grander spectacle, or a drama more sublime? We forget the wonders of the first Exodus when we contemplate the mightier scale and the more enduring glories of the second. When we think of the bitterness and baseness of the slavery which England left behind her, and the glorious heritage of freedom and God-given religion to which she now began to point her steps, we can find no words in which to vent our gratitude and praise but those of the Divine Ode written long before, and meant at once to predict and to commemorate this glorious emancipation:

“He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the sons of men.”
([Psalm 107:14, 15](#))

Chapter 10: The Translation of the Scriptures, or the English Bible

Peril of Wicliffe—Death of Gregory XI—Death of Edward III—Consequent Safety of Wicliffe—Schism in the Papal Chair—Division in Christendom—Which is the True Pope?—A Papal Thunderstorm—Wicliffe Retires to Lutterworth—His Views still Enlarging—Supreme Authority of Scripture—Sickness, and Interview with the Friars—Resolves to Translate the Bible—Early Translations—Bede, etc—Wicliffe’s Translation—Its Beauty—The Day of the Reformation has fairly Broken—Transcription and Publication—Impression produced—Right to Read the Bible—Denounced by the Priests—Defended by Wicliffe—Transformation accomplished on England

Picture: Interior of the Vatican Library

Picture: Wayside Preaching from the Bible (time of Wicliffe)

While Wicliffe was struggling to break first of all his own fetters, and next the fetters of an enslaved nation, God was working in the high places of the earth for his preservation. Every day the number of his enemies increased. The shield of John of Gaunt no longer covered his head. Soon not a friend would there be by his side, and he would be left naked and defenseless to the rage of his foes. But He who said to the patriarch of old, “Fear not, I am thy shield,” protected his own chosen champion. Wicliffe had offered inexpiable affront to Gregory; he had plucked England as a prey out of his very teeth; he had driven away his taxgatherers, who continually hovered like a flock of cormorants round the land. But not content with clipping the talons of the Papacy and checking her rapacity in time to come, he was even now meditating how he might make her reckon for the past, and disgorge the wealth which by so many and so questionable means she had already devoured, and send forth abbot and monk as poor as were the apostles and first preachers. This was not to be borne. For a hundredth part of this, how many men had ere

this done expiation in the fire! No wonder that Wicliffe was marked out as the man to be struck down. Three bulls did Gregory dispatch with this object. The university, the hierarchy, the king: on all were the Pontifical commands laid to arrest and imprison the heretic - the short road to the stake. Wicliffe was as good as dead; so doubtless was it thought at Avignon.

Death was about to strike, but it was on Gregory XI. that the blow was destined to fall. Instead of a stake at Oxford, there was a bier at the Vatican. The Pope a little while before had returned to Rome, so terminating the "Babylonish captivity;" but he had returned only to die (1378). But death struck a second time: there was a bier at Westminster as well as at the Vatican. When Courtenay, Bishop of London, was about to summon Wicliffe to his bar, Edward III., whose senility the bishop was likely to take advantage of against the Reformer, died also, and John of Gaunt became regent of the kingdom. So now, when the Papal toils were closing around Wicliffe, death suddenly stiffened the hand that had woven them, and the commission of delegates which the now defunct Gregory had appointed to try, and which he had commanded to condemn the Reformer, was dissolved. ¹

In another way did the death of the Pope give a breathing-time to the Reformer and the young Reformation of England. On the 7th of April, 1378, the cardinals assembled in the Quirinal to elect a successor to Gregory. The majority of the sacred college being Frenchmen, the Roman populace, fearing that they would place one of their own nation in the vacant chair, and that the Pontifical court would again retire to Avignon, gathered round the palace where the cardinals were met, and with loud tumult and terrible threats demanded a Roman for their Pope. Not a cardinal should leave the hall alive, so did the rioters threaten, unless their request was complied with. An Italian, the Archbishop of Bari, was chosen; the mob was soothed, and instead of stoning the cardinals it saluted them with "Vivas." But the new Pope was austere, penurious, tyrannical, and selfish; the cardinals soon became disgusted, and escaping from Rome they met and chose a Frenchman - Robert, Bishop of Geneva - for the tiara, declaring the former election null on the plea that

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¹Walsingham, *Hist. of Eng.*, p. 205.

the choice had been made under compulsion. Thus was created the famous schism in the Papal chair which for a full half-century divided and scandalized the Papal world.

Christendom now saw, with feelings bordering on affright, two Popes in the chair of Peter. Which was the true vicar, and which carried the key that alone could open and shut the gates of Paradise? This became the question of the age, and a most momentous question it was to men who believed that their eternal salvation hung upon its solution. Consciences were troubled; council was divided against council; bishop battled with bishop; and kings and governments were compelled to take part in the quarrel. Germany and England, and some of the smaller States in the center of Europe, sided with the first-elected Pope, who took possession of the Vatican under the title of Urban VI. Spain, France, and Scotland espoused the cause of the second, who installed himself at Avignon under the name of Clement VII. Thus, as the first dawn of the Gospel day was breaking on Christendom, God clave the Papal head in twain, and divided the Papal world. ²

But for this schism Wicliffe, to all human appearance, would have been struck down, and his work in England stamped out. But now the Popes found other work than to pursue heresy. Fast and furious from Rome to Avignon, and from Avignon back again to Rome, flew the Papal bolts. Far above the humble head of the Lutterworth rector flashed these lightnings and rolled these thunders. While this storm was raging Wicliffe retired to his country charge, glad doubtless to escape for a little while from the attacks of his enemies, and to solace himself in the bosom of his loving flock. He was not idle however. While the Popes were hurling curses at each other, and shedding torrents of blood - for by this time they had drawn the sword in support of their rival claims to be Christ's vicar while flagrant scandals and hideous corruptions were ravaging the Church, and frightful crimes and disorder were distracting the State (for it would take "another Iliad," ³ as Fox says, to narrate all the miseries and woes that afflicted the world during this schism), Wicliffe was sowing by the peaceful waters of the Avon, and in

²Mosheim, cent. 14, part 2, chap. 2, sec. 14. Hume, Rich. II., Miscell. Trans.

³Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 2, p. 567.

the rural homesteads of Lutterworth, that Divine seed which yields righteousness and peace in this world, and eternal life in that which is to come.

It was now that the Reformer opened the second part of his great career. Hitherto his efforts had been mainly directed to breaking the political fetters in which the Papacy had bound his countrymen. But stronger fetters held fast their souls. These his countrymen needed more to have rent, though perhaps they galled them less, and to this higher object the Reformer now exclusively devoted what of life and strength remained to him. In this instance, too, his own fuller emancipation preceded that of his countrymen. The "schism," with the scandals and crimes that flowed from it, helped to reveal to him yet more clearly the true character of the Papacy. He published a tract *On the Schism of the Popes*, in which he appealed to the nation whether those men who were denouncing each other as the Antichrist were not, in this case, speaking the truth, and whether the present was not an opportunity given them by Providence for grasping those political weapons which He had wrested from the hands of the hierarchy, and using them in the destruction of those oppressive and iniquitous laws and customs under which England had so long groaned. "The fiend," he said, "no longer reigns in one but in two priests, that men may the more easily, in Christ's name, overcome them both."⁴

We trace from this time a rapid advance in the views of the Reformer. It was now that he published his work *On the Truth and Meaning of Scripture*. In this work he maintains "the supreme authority of Scripture," "the right of private judgment," and that "Christ's law sufficeth by itself to rule Christ's Church." This was to discrown the Pope, and to raze the foundations of his kingdom. Here he drops the first hint of his purpose to translate the Bible into the English vernacular - a work which was to be the crown of his labours.⁵

⁴MS. of *The Church and her Governance*, Bib. Reg. 18, B. 9; apud Vaughan, *Life of Wicliffe*, vol 2, p. 6.

⁵*De Sensu et Veritate Scripturoe*. A copy of this work was in the possession of Fox the martyrologist. (Fox, vol 1) Two copies of it are known to be still extant, one in the Bodleian Library and the other in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. (Vaughan, *Life*, vol. 2, p. 7)

[107] Wicliffe was now getting old, but the Reformer was worn out rather by the harassing attacks of his foes, and his incessant and ever-growing labours, than with the weight of years, for he was not yet sixty. He fell sick. With unbounded joy the friars heard that their great enemy was dying. Of course he was overwhelmed with horror and remorse for the evil he had done them, and they would hasten to his bedside and receive the expression of his penitence and sorrow. In a trice a little crowd of shaven crowns assembled round the couch of the sick man - delegates from the four orders of friars. "They began fair," wishing him "health and restoration from his distemper;" but speedily changing their tone, they exhorted him, as one on the brink of the grave, to make full confession, and express his unfeigned grief for the injuries he had inflicted on their order. Wicliffe lay silent till they should have made an end, then, making his servant raise him a little on his pillow, and fixing his keen eyes upon them, he said with a loud voice, "I shall not die, but live and declare the evil deeds of the friars." The monks rushed in astonishment and confusion from the chamber.⁶

[108] As Wicliffe had foretold so it came to pass. His sickness left him, and he rose from his bed to do the most daring of his impieties as his enemies accounted it, the most glorious of his services as the friends of humanity will ever esteem it. The work of which so very different estimates have been formed, was that of giving the Bible to the people of England in their own tongue. True, there were already copies of the Word of God in England, but they were in a language the commonalty did not understand, and so the revelation of God to man was as completely hidden from the people as if God had never spoken.

To this ignorance of the will of God, Wicliffe traced the manifold evils that afflicted the kingdom. "I will fill England with light," he might have said, "and the ghostly terrors inspired by the priests, and the bondage in which they keep the people through their superstitious fears, will flee away as do the phantoms of the night when the sun rises. I will re-open the appointed channel of holy influence between

⁶Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 82. Lewis places this occurrence in the beginning of the year 1379.

earth and the skies, and the face of the world will be renewed." It was a sublime thought.

Till the seventh century we meet with no attempt to give the Bible to the people of England in their mother-tongue. Caedmon, an Anglo-Saxon monk, was the first to give the English people a taste of what the Bible contained. We cannot call his performance a translation. Caedmon appears to have possessed a poetic genius, and deeming the opening incidents of inspired history well fitted for the drama, he wove them into a poem, which, beginning with the Creation, ran on through the scenes of patriarchal times, the miracles of the Exodus, the journey through the desert, till it terminated at the gates of Palestine and the entrance of the tribes into the Promised Land. Such a book was not of much account as an instruction in the will of God and the way of Life. Others followed with attempts at paraphrasing rather than translating portions of the Word of God, among whom were Alfric and Alfred the Great. The former epitomized several of the books of the Old Testament; the latter in the ninth century summoned a body of learned men to translate the Scriptures, but scarcely was the task begun when the great prince died, and the work was stopped.

The attempt of Bede in the eighth century deserves our notice. [109] He is said to have translated into the Anglo-Saxon tongue the Gospel of John. He was seized with a fatal illness after beginning, but he vehemently longed to finish before breathing forth his spirit. He toiled at his task day by day, although the malady continued, and his strength sank lower and lower. His life and his work were destined to end together. At length the morning of that day dawned which the venerable man felt would be his last on earth. There remained yet one chapter to be translated. He summoned the amanuensis to his bed-side. "Take your pen," said Bede, who felt that every minute was precious - "quick, take your pen and write." The amanuensis read verse by verse from the Vulgate, which, rendered into Anglo-Saxon by Bede, was taken down by the swift pen of the writer. As they pursued their joint labor, they were interrupted by the entrance of some officials, who came to make arrangements to which the assent of the dying man was required. This over, the loving scribe was again at his task. "Dear master," said he, "there is yet one verse." "Be quick," said Bede. It was read in Latin, repeated in Anglo-Saxon,

and put down in writing. "It is finished," said the amanuensis in a tone of exultation. "Thou hast truly said it is finished," responded in soft and grateful accents the dying man. Then gently raising his hands he said, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," and expired. ⁷

From the reign of Alfred in the ninth century till the age of Wicliffe there was no attempt if we except that; of Richard Roll, Hermit of Hampole, in the same century with Wicliffe - to give a literal translation of any portion of the Bible. ⁸ And even if the versions of which we have spoken had been worthier and more complete, they did not serve the end their authors sought. They were rarely brought beyond the precincts of the cell, or they were locked up as curiosities in the library of some nobleman at whose expense copies had been made. They did not come into the hands of the people.

Wicliffe's idea was to give the whole Bible in the vernacular to the people of England, so that every man in the realm might read in the tongue wherein he was born the wonderful works of God. No one in England had thought of such a thing before. As one who turns away from the sun to guide his steps by the light of a taper, so did the men of those days turn to tradition, to the scholastic philosophy, to Papal infallibility; but the more they followed these guides, the farther they strayed from the true path. God was in the world; the Divine Light was in the pavilion of the Word, but no one thought of drawing aside the curtain and letting that light shine upon the path of men. This was the achievement Wicliffe now set himself to do. If he could accomplish this he would do more to place the liberties

⁷Cuthbert, *Vita Ven. Bedoe.*

⁸Sir Thomas More believed that there existed in MS. an earlier translation of the Scriptures into English than Wicliffe's. Thomas James, first librarian of the Bodleian Library, thought that he had seen an older MS. Bible in English than the time of Wicliffe. Thomas Wharton, editor of the works of Archbishop Ussher, thought he was able to show who the writer of these supposed pre-Wicliffite translations was - viz., John von Trevisa, priest in Cornwall. Wharton afterwards saw cause to change his opinion, and was convinced that the MS. which Sir Thomas More and Thomas James had seen was nothing else than copies of the translation of Wicliffe made by his disciples. If an older translation of the Bible had existed there must have been some certain traces of it, and the Wicliffites would not have failed to bring it up in their own justification. They knew nothing of an older translation. (See Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 1, p. 431.)

of England on an immutable foundation, and to raise his country to greatness, than would a hundred brilliant victories.

He had not, however, many years in which to do his great work. There remained only the portion of a decade of broken health. But his intellectual rigor was unimpaired, his experience and graces were at their ripest. What had the whole of his past life been but a preparation for what was to be the glorious task of his evening? He was a good Latin scholar. He set himself down in his quiet Rectory of Lutterworth. He opened the Vulgate Scriptures, that book which all his life he had studied, and portions of which he had already translated. The world around him was shaken with convulsions; two Popes were hurling their anathemas at one another. Wicliffe pursued his sublime work undisturbed by the roar of the tempest. Day by day he did his self-appointed task. As verse after verse was rendered into the English tongue, the Reformer had the consolation of thinking that another ray had been shot into the darkness which brooded over his native land, that another bolt had been forged to rend the shackles which bound the souls of his countrymen. In four years from beginning his task, the Reformer had completed it. The message of Heaven was now in the speech of England. The dawn of the Reformation had fairly broken.

Wicliffe had assistance in his great work. The whole of the New Testament was translated by himself; but Dr. Nicholas de Hereford, of Oxford, is supposed to have been the translator of the Old Testament, which, however, was partly revised by Wicliffe. This version is remarkably truthful and spirited. The antique Saxon gives a dramatic air to some passages.⁹ Wicliffe's version of the Bible rendered other services than the religious one, though that was pre-eminent and paramount. It powerfully contributed to form the English tongue, in the way of perfecting its structure and enlarging its vocabulary. The sublimity and purity of the doctrines reacted on the language into which they were rendered, communicating to it a simplicity, a beauty, a pathos, a precision, and a force unknown

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⁹“Thus, instead of ‘Paul the servant of Jesus Christ,’ Wicliffe’s version gives, ‘Paul, the knave of Jesus Christ.’ ‘For a mightier than I cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose,’ his version reads, ‘For a stalworthier than I cometh after me, the strings of whose chaucers I am not worthy to unlouse.’” (M’Crie, *Annals of English Presbytery*, p. 41.)

to it till then. Wicliffe has been called the Father of English Prose, as Chaucer is styled the Father of English Poetry. No man in his day wrote so much as Wicliffe. Writing for the common people, he studied to be simple and clear. He was in earnest, and the enthusiasm of his soul supplied him with direct and forcible terms. He wrote on the highest themes, and his style partook of the elevation of his subject; it is graphic and trenchant, and entirely free from those conceits and puerilities which disfigure the productions of all the other writers of his day. But his version of the Bible surpasses all his other compositions in tenderness, and grace, and dignity.¹⁰ Lechler has well said on this point: "If we compare, however, Wicliffe's Bible, not with his own English writings, but with the other English literature before and after him, a still more important consideration suggests itself. Wicliffe's translation marks in its own way quite as great an epoch in the development of the English language, as Luther's translation does in the history of the German language. Luther's Bible opened the period of the new high German, Wicliffe's Bible stands at the top of the medieval English. It is true, Geoffrey Chaucer, the Father of English Poetry, and not Wicliffe, is generally considered as the pioneer of medieval English literature. But with much more reason have later philologists assigned that rank to the prose of Wicliffe's Bible. Chaucer has certainly some rare traits - liveliness of description, charming grace of expression, genuine English humor, and masterly power of language - but such qualities address themselves more to men of culture. They are not adapted to be a form of speech for the mass of the people. That which is to propagate a new language must be something on which the weal and woe of mankind depend, which therefore irresistibly seizes upon

¹⁰Luther translated the Bible out of the original Greek. Wicliffe, who did not know Greek, translated out of the Latin Vulgate. That the New Testament was translated by himself is tolerably certain. Lechler says that the translation of the Old Testament, in the original handwriting, with erasures and alterations, is in the Bodleian Library; and that there is also there a MS. copy of this translation, with a note saying that it was the work of Dr. Nicholas de Hereford. Both manuscripts break off in the middle of a verse of the Book Baruch, which strengthens the probability that the translation was by Dr. Nicholas, who was suddenly summoned before the Provincial Synod at London, and did not resume his work. The translation itself proves that the work from Baruch onward to the end was by some one else - not improbably Wicliffe himself. (See Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 1, p. 448.)

all, the highest as well as the lowest, and, as Luther says, ‘fills the heart.’ It must be a moral, religious truth, which, grasped with a new inspiration, finds acceptance and diffusion in a new form of speech. As Luther opened up in Germany a higher development of the Teutonic language, so Wicliffe and his school have become through his Bible the founders of the medieval English, in which last lie the fundamental features of the new English since the sixteenth century.”¹¹

The Reformer had done his great work (1382). What an epoch in the history of England! What mattered it when a dungeon or a grave might close over him? He had kindled a light which could never be put out. He had placed in the hands of his countrymen their true Magna Charta. That which the barons at Runnymede had wrested from King John would have been turned to but little account had not this mightier charter come after. Wicliffe could now see the Saxon people, guided by this pillar of fire, marching steadily onward to liberty. It might take one or it might take five centuries to consummate their emancipation; but, with the Bible in their mother-tongue, no power on earth could retain them in thralldom. The doors of the house of their bondage had been flung open.

When the work of translating was ended, the nearly as difficult work of publishing began. In those days there was no printing-press to multiply copies by the thousand as in our times, and no publishing firm to circulate these thousands over the kingdom. The author himself had to see to all this. The methods of publishing a book in that age were various. The more common way was to place a copy in the hall of some convent or in the library of some college, where all might come and read, and, if the book pleased, order a copy to be made for their own use; much as, at this day, an artist displays his picture in a hall or gallery, where its merits find admirers and often purchasers. Others set up pulpits at cross-ways, and places of public resort, and read portions of their work in the hearing of the audiences that gathered round them, and those who liked what they heard bought copies for themselves. But Wicliffe did not need to have recourse to any of these expedients. The interest

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¹¹Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 1, pp. 453, 454. See also Friedrich Koch, *Historische Grammatik der Englischen Sprache*, 1, p. 19; 1863.

taken in the man and in his work enlisted a hundred expert hands, who, though they toiled to multiply copies, could scarcely supply the many who were eager to buy. Some ordered complete copies to be made for them; others were content with portions; the same copy served several families in many instances, and in a very short time Wicliffe's English Bible had obtained a wide circulation,¹² and brought a new life into many an English home.

As when the day opens on some weary traveller who, all night long, has been groping his way amid thickets and quagmires, so was it with those of the English people who read the Word of Life now presented to them in their mother-tongue. As they were toiling amid the fatal pitfalls of superstition, or were held fast in the thorny thickets of a skeptical scholasticism, suddenly this great light broke upon them. They rejoiced with an exceeding great joy. They now saw the open path to the Divine Mercy-seat; and putting aside the many mediators whom Rome had commissioned to conduct them to it, but who in reality had hidden it from them, they entered boldly by the one Mediator, and stood in the presence of Him who sitteth upon the Throne.

The hierarchy, when they learned what Wicliffe had done, were struck with consternation. They had comforted themselves with the thought that the movement would die with Wicliffe, and that he had but a few years to live. They now saw that another instrumentality, mightier than even Wicliffe, had entered the field; that another preacher was destined to take his place, when the Reformer's voice should be silent. This preacher they could not bind to a stake and burn. With silent foot he was already traversing the length and breadth of England. When head of princely abbot and lordly prelate reposed on pillow, this preacher, who "did not know sleep with his eye day nor night," was executing his mission, entering the homes and winning the hearts of the people. They raised a great cry. Wicliffe had attacked the Church; he wished to destroy religion itself.

¹²In 1850 an edition of Wicliffe's Bible, the first ever printed; issued from the press of Oxford. It is in four octavo volumes, and contains two different texts. The editors, the Rev. Mr. Forshall and Sir Frederick Madden, in preparing it for the press, collated not fewer than 150 manuscript copies, the most of which were transcribed, they had reason to think, within forty years of the first appearance of the translation.

This raised the question of the right of the people to read the Bible. The question was new in England, for the plain reason that till now there had been no Bible to read. And for the same reason there was no law prohibiting the use of the Bible by the people, it being deemed both useless and imprudent to enact a law against an offense it was then impossible to commit. The Romaunt version, the venacular of the south of Europe in the Middle Ages, had been in existence for two centuries, and the Church of Rome had forbidden its use. The English was the first of the modern tongues into which the Word of God was translated, and though this version was to fall under the ban of the Church,¹³ as the Romaunt had done before it, the hierarchy, taken unawares, were not yet ready with their fulmination, and meanwhile the Word of God spread mightily. The Waters of Life were flowing through the land, and spots of verdure were beginning to beautify the desert of England.

But if not a legal, a moral interdict was instantly promulgated against the reading of the Bible by the people. Henry de Knighton, Canon of Leicester, uttered a mingled wail of sorrow and denunciation. "Christ," said he, "delivered His Gospel to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might administer to the laity and to weaker persons, according to the state of the times and the wants of men. But this Master John Wicliffe translated it out of Latin into English, and thus laid it more open to the laity, and to women who could read, than it had formerly been to the most learned of the clergy, even to those of them who had the best understanding. And in this way the Gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine, and that which was before precious to both clergy and laity is rendered, as it were, common jest to both."¹⁴

¹³In 1408, an English council, with Archbishop Arundel at its head, enacted and ordained "that no one henceforth do, by his own authority, translate any text of Holy Scripture into the English tongue, or any other, by way of book or treatise, nor let any such book or treatise now lately composed in the time of John Wicliffe aforesaid, or since, or hereafter to be composed, be read in whole or in part, in public or in private, under pain of the greater excommunication." So far as this council could secure it, not only was the translation of Wicliffe to be taken from them, but the people of England were never, in any coming age, to have a version of the Word of God in their own tongue, or in any living language. (Wilkins, *Concilia*, 3. 317.)

¹⁴Knighon, *De Event. Angioe*; apud X. *Scriptores*, col. 2644. Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, chap. 5, p. 83.

[112] In short, a great clamor was raised against the Reformer by the priests and their followers, unhappily the bulk of the nation. He was a heretic, a sacrilegious man; he had committed a crime unknown to former ages; he had broken into the temple and stolen the sacred vessels; he had fired the House of God. Such were the terms in which the man was spoken of, who had given to his country the greatest boon England ever received.

Wicliffe had to fight the battle alone. No peer or great man stood by his side. It would seem as if there must come, in the career of all great reformers - and Wicliffe stands in the first rank - a moment when, forsaken of all, and painfully sensible of their isolation, they must display the perfection and sublimity of faith by leaning only on One, even God. Such a moment had come to the Reformer of the fourteenth century. Wicliffe stood alone in the storm. But he was tranquil; he looked his raging foes calmly in the face. He retorted on them the charges they had hurled against himself. You say, said he, that "it is heresy to speak of the Holy Scriptures in English." You call me a heretic because I have translated the Bible into the common tongue of the people. Do you know whom you blaspheme? Did not the Holy Ghost give the Word of God at first in the mother-tongue of the nations to whom it was addressed? Why do you speak against the Holy Ghost? You say that the Church of God is in danger from this book. How can that be? Is it not from the Bible only that we learn that God has set up such a society as a Church on the earth? Is it not the Bible that gives all her authority to the Church? Is it not from the Bible that we learn who is the Builder and Sovereign of the Church, what are the laws by which she is to be governed, and the rights and privileges of her members? Without the Bible, what charter has the Church to show for all these? It is you who place the Church in jeopardy by hiding the Divine warrant, the missive royal of her King, for the authority she wields and the faith she enjoys. ¹⁵

The circulation of the Scriptures had arrayed the Protestant movement in the panoply of light. Wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, it was marching on, leaving behind it, as the monuments of its prowess, in many an English homestead, eyes once blind now opened; hearts lately depraved now purified. Majestic as

¹⁵See Lewis. *Life of Wiclif*, pp. 86 - 88.

the morning when, descending from the skies, she walks in steps of silent glory over the earth, so was the progress of the Book of God. There was a track of light wherever it had passed in the crowded city, in the lofty baronial hall, in the peasant's humble cot. Though Wicliffe had lived a thousand years, and occupied himself during all of them in preaching, he could not have hoped for the good which he now saw in course of being accomplished by the silent action of the English Bible.

Chapter 11: Wicliffe and Transubstantiation

Wicliffe Old—Continues the War—Attacks
 Transubstantiation—History of the Dogma—Wicliffe’s Doctrine on
 the Eucharist—Condemned by the University Court—Wicliffe
 Appeals to the King and Parliament, and Retires to
 Lutterworth—The Insurrection of Wat Tyler—The Primate Sudbury
 Beheaded—Courtenay elected Primate—He cites Wicliffe before
 him—The Synod at Blackfriars—An Earthquake—The Primate
 reassures the Terrified Bishops—Wicliffe’s Doctrine on the
 Eucharist Condemned—The Primate gains over the King—The
 First Persecuting Edict—Wicliffe’s Friends fall away

Picture: Lutterworth Church

Picture: Trial of Wicliffe in the Blackfriars’ Monastery, London

Did the Reformer now rest? He was old and sickly, and needed repose. His day had been a stormy one; sweet it were at its even-tide to taste a little quiet. But no. He panted, if it were possible and if God were willing, to see his country’s emancipation completed, and England a reformed land, before closing his eyes and descending into his grave. It was, he felt, a day of visitation. That day had come first of all to England. Oh that she were wise, and that in this her day she knew the things that belonged to her peace! If not, she might have to buy with many tears and much blood, through years, and it might be centuries, of conflict, what seemed now so nearly within her reach. Wicliffe resolved, therefore, that there should be no pause in the war. He had just ended one battle, he now girded himself for another. He turned to attack the doctrinal system of the Church of Rome.

He had come ere this to be of opinion that the system of Rome’s doctrines, and the ceremonies of her worship, were anti-Christian - a “new religion, founded of sinful men,” and opposed to “the rule of Jesus Christ given by Him to His apostles;” but in beginning this new battle he selected one particular dogma, as the object of attack.

That dogma was Transubstantiation. It is here that the superstition of Rome culminates: it is in this more than in any other dogma that we find the sources of her prodigious authority, and the springs of her vast influence. In making his blow to fall here, Wicliffe knew that the stroke would have ten-fold more effect than if directed against a less vital part of the system. If he could abolish the sacrifice of the priest, he would bring back the sacrifice of Christ, which alone is the Gospel, because through it is the “remission of sins,” and the “life everlasting.”

Transubstantiation, as we have already shown, was invented by the monk Paschasius Radbertus in the ninth century; it came into England in the train of William the Conqueror and his Anglo-Norman priests; it was zealously preached by Lanfranc, a Benedictine monk and Abbot of St. Stephen of Caen in Normandy,¹ who was raised to the See of Canterbury under William; and from the time of Lanfranc to the days of Wicliffe this teller was received by the Anglo-Norman clergy of England.² It was hardly to be expected that they would very narrowly or critically examine the foundations of a doctrine which contributed so greatly to their power; and as regards the laity of those days, it was enough for them if they had the word of the Church that this doctrine was true.

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In the spring of 1381, Wicliffe posted up at Oxford twelve propositions denying the dogma of transubstantiation, and challenging all of the contrary opinion to debate the matter with him.³ The first of these propositions was as follows: - “The consecrated Host, which we see upon the altar, is neither Christ nor any part of Him, but an efficacious sign of Him.” He admitted that the words of consecration invest the elements with a mysterious and venerable character, but that they do in nowise change their substance. The bread and wine

¹Gabrid d’Emillianne, Preface.

²“It had been for near a thousand years after Christ the Catholic doctrine,” says Lewis, “and particularly of this Church of England, that, as one of our Saxon homilies expresses it, ‘‘Much is betwixt the body of Christ suffered in, and the body hallowed to housell [the Sacrament]; this latter being only His ghostly body gathered of many cornes,,without blood and bone, without limb, without soule, and therefore nothing is to be understood therein bodily, but all is to be ghostly understood.’” (Homily published by Archbishop Parker, with attestation of Archbishop of York and thirteen bishops, and imprinted at London by John Day, Aldersgate beneath St. Martin’s, 1567.)

³Lewis, Life of Wiclif, chap. 6.

are as really bread and wine after as before their consecration. Christ, he goes on to reason, called the elements “bread” and “My body;” they were “bread” and they were Christ’s “body,” as He Himself is very man and very God, without any commingling of the two natures; so the elements are “bread” and “Christ’s body” - “bread” really, and “Christ’s body” figuratively and spiritually. Such, in brief, is what Wicliffe avowed as his opinion on the Eucharist at the commencement of the controversy, and on this ground he continued to stand all throughout it. ⁴

Great was the commotion at Oxford. There were astonished looks, there was a buzz of talk, heads were laid close together in earnest and subdued conversation; but no one accepted the challenge of Wicliffe. All shouted heresy; on that point there was a clear unanimity of opinion, but no one ventured to prove it to the only man in Oxford who needed to have it proved to him. The chancellor of the university, William de Barton, summoned a council of twelve - four secular doctors and eight monks. The council unanimously condemned Wicliffe’s opinion as heretical, and threatened divers heavy penalties against any one who should teach it in the university, or listen to the teaching of it. ⁵

The council, summoned in haste, met, it would seem, in comparative secrecy, for Wicliffe knew nothing of what was going on. He was in his classroom, expounding to his students the true nature of the Eucharist, when the door opened, and a delegate from the council made his appearance in the hall. He held in his hand the sentence of the doctors, which he proceeded to read. It enjoined silence on

⁴Conclusiones J. Wiclefi de Sacramento Altaris - MS. Hyp. Bodl. 163. The first proposition is - “Hostia consecrata quam videmus in Altari nec est Christus nec aliqua sui pars, sed efficax ejus signum.” See also Confessio Magistri Johannis Wycliff - Lewis, Appendix, 323. In this confession he says: “For we believe that there is a three-fold mode of the subsistence of the body of Christ in the consecrated Host, namely, a virtual, a spiritual, and a sacramental one” (virtualis, spiritualis, et sacramentalis).

⁵Definitio facta per Cancellarium et Doctores Universitatis Oxonii, de Sacramento Altaris contra Opiniones Wycliffanas - MS. Hyp. Bodl. 163. Vaughan says: “Sir R. Twisden refers to the above censures in support of this doctrine as “the first, plenary determination of the Church of England” respecting it, and accordingly concludes that “the opinion of the Church of transubstantiation, that brought so many to the stake, had not more than a hundred and forty years” prescription before Martin Luther.”” (Vaughan, Life of John de Wicliffe, vol. 2, p.

Wicliffe as regarded his opinions on transubstantiation, under pain of imprisonment, suspension from all scholastic functions, and the greater excommunication. This was tantamount to his expulsion from the university. "But," interposed Wicliffe, "you ought first to have shown me that I am in error." The only response was to be reminded of the sentence of the court, to which, he was told, he must submit himself, or take the penalty. "Then," said Wicliffe, "I appeal to the king and the Parliament."⁶

But some time was to elapse before Parliament should meet; and meanwhile the Reformer, watched and lettered in his chair, thought best to withdraw to Lutterworth. The jurisdiction of the chancellor of the university could not follow him to his parish. He passed a few quiet months ministering the "true bread" to his loving flock; being all the more anxious, since he could no longer make his voice heard at Oxford, to diffuse through his pulpit and by his pen those blessed truths which he had drawn from the fountains of Revelation. He needed, moreover, this heavenly bread for his own support. "Come aside with Me and rest awhile," was the language of this Providence. In communion with his Master he would efface the pain of past conflicts, and arm himself for new ones. His way hitherto had been far from smooth, but what remained of it was likely to be even rougher. This, however, should be as God willed; one thing he knew, and oh, how transporting the thought! - that he should find a quiet home at the end of it.

New and unexpected clouds now gathered in the sky. Before Wicliffe could prosecute his appeal in Parliament, an insurrection broke out in England. The causes and the issues of that insurrection do not here concern us, farther than as they bore on the fate of the Reformer. Wat Tyler, and a priest of the name of John Ball, traversed England, rousing the passions of the populace with fiery harangues preached from the text they had written upon their banners: - "When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?"

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These tumults were not confined to England, they extended to France and other Continental countries, and like the sudden yawning of a gulf, they show us the inner condition of society in the fourteenth century. How different from its surface! - the theater of wars and

⁶Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, chap. 6, pp. 95, 96.

pageants, which alone the historian thinks it worth his while to paint. There was nothing in the teaching of Wicliffe to minister stimulus to such ebullitions of popular wrath, yet it suited his enemies to lay them at his door, and to say, "See what comes of permitting these strange and demoralizing doctrines to be taught." It were a wholly superfluous task to vindicate Wicliffe or the Gospel on this score.

But in one way these events did connect themselves with the Reformer. The mob apprehended Sudbury the primate, and beheaded him.⁷ Courtenay, the bitter enemy of Wicliffe, was installed in the vacant see. And now we look for more decisive measures against him. Yet God, by what seemed an oversight at Rome, shielded the venerable Reformer. The bull appointing Courtenay to the primacy arrived, but the pall did not come with it. The pall, it is well known, is the most essential of all those badges and insignia by which the Pope conveys to bishops the authority to act under him. Courtenay was too obedient a son of the Pope knowingly to transgress one of the least of his father's commandments. He burned with impatience to strike the head of heresy in England, but his scrupulous conscience would not permit him to proceed even against Wicliffe till the pall had given him full investiture with office.⁸ Hence the refreshing quiet and spiritual solace which the Reformer continued to enjoy at his country rectory. It was now that Wicliffe shot another bolt - the Wicket.

At last the pall arrived. The primate, in possession of the mysterious and potent symbol, could now exercise the full powers of his great office. He immediately convoked a synod to try the Rector of Lutterworth. The court met on the 17th of May, 1382, in a place of evil augury - when we take into account with whom Wicliffe's life-battle had been waged - the Monastery of Blackfriars, London. The judges were assembled, including eight prelates, fourteen doctors of the canon and of the civil law, six bachelors of divinity, four monks, and fifteen Mendicant friars. They had taken their seats, and were proceeding to business, when an ominous sound filled the air, and the building in which they were assembled began to rock. The

⁷Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 568.

⁸Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 97. Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 2, p. 89.

monastery and all the city of London were shaken by an earthquake.
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Startled and terrified, the members of the court, turning to the president, demanded an adjournment. It did seem as if “the stars in their courses” were fighting against the primate. On the first occasion on which he summoned Wicliffe before him, the populace forced their way into the hall, and the court broke up in confusion. The same thing happened over again on the second occasion on which Wicliffe came to his bar; a popular tempest broke over the court, and the judges were driven from the judgment-seat. A third time Wicliffe is summoned, and the court meets in a place where it was easier to take precautions against interference from the populace, when lo! the ground is suddenly rocked by an earthquake. But Courtenay had now got his pall from Rome, and was above these weak fears. So turning to his brother judges, he delivered to them a short homily on the earthly uses and mystic meanings of earthquakes, and bade them be of good courage and go on. “This earthquake,” said he, “portends the purging of the kingdom from heresies. For as there are shut up in the bowels of the earth many noxious spirits, which are expelled in an earthquake, and so the earth is cleansed, but not without great violence: so there are many heresies shut up in the hearts of reprobate men, but by the condemnation of them the kingdom is to be cleansed, but not without irksomeness and great commotion.”¹⁰ The court accepting, on the archbishop’s authority, the earthquake as a good omen, went on with the trial of Wicliffe.

An officer of the court read out twenty-six propositions selected from the writings of the Reformer. The court sat three days in “good deliberation” over them.¹¹ It unanimously condemned ten of them as heretical, and the remainder as erroneous. Among those specially

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⁹Here is not to be passed over the great miracle of God’s Divine admonition or warning, for when as “the archbishops and suffragans, with the other doctors of divinity and lawyers, with a great company of babling friars and religious persons, were gathered together to consult touching John Wicliffe’s books, and that whole sect; when, as I say, they were gathered together at the Grayfriars in London, to begin their business, upon St. Dunstan’s day after dinner, about two of the clock, the very hour and instant that they should go forward with their business, a wonderful and terrible earthquake fell throughout all England.” (Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 570.)

¹⁰Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, pp. 106, 107. Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 570.

¹¹Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 2, p. 91.

branded as heresies, were the propositions relating to transubstantiation, the temporal emoluments of the hierarchy, and the supremacy of the Pope, which last Wicliffe admitted might be deduced from the emperor, but certainly not from Christ. The sentence of the court was sent to the Bishop of London and all his brethren, the suffragans of the diocese of Canterbury, as also to the Bishop of Lincoln, Wicliffe's diocesan, accompanied by the commands of Courtenay, as "Primate of all England," that they should look to it that these pestiferous doctrines were not taught in their dioceses. ¹²

Besides these two missives, a third was dispatched to the University of Oxford, which was, in the primate's eyes, nothing better than a hot-bed of heresy. The chancellor, William de Barton, who presided over the court that condemned Wicliffe the year before, was dead, and his office was now filled by Robert Rigge, who was friendly to the Reformer. Among the professors and students were many who had imbibed the sentiments of Wicliffe, and needed to be warned against the "venomous serpent," to whose seductions they had already begun to listen. When the primate saw that his counsel did not find the ready ear which he thought it entitled to from that learned body, but that, on the contrary, they continued to toy with the danger, he resolved to save them in spite of themselves. He carried his complaint to the young king, Richard II. "If we permit this heretic," said he, "to appeal continually to the passions of the people, our destruction is inevitable; we must silence these lollards." ¹³ The king was gained over. He gave authority "to confine in the prisons of the State any who should maintain the condemned propositions." ¹⁴

¹²Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 569. Knighton, *De Event. Anglioe*, cols. 2650, 2651.

¹³Many derivations have been found for this word; the following is the most probable: - "Lollen, or lullen, signifies to sing with a low voice. It is yet used in the same sense among the English, who say lull asleep, which signifies to sing any one into a slumber. The word is also used in the same sense among the Flemings, Swedes, and other nations. Among the Germans both the sense and the pronunciation of it have undergone some alteration, for they say lallen, which signifies to pronounce indistinctly or stammer. Lollard therefore is a singer, or one who frequently sings." (Mosheim, *cent.* 14, pt. 2, s. 36, foot-note.)

¹⁴Lewis, *Life of Wiclif*, p. 113. D'Aubigne, *Hist. of Reform.*, vol. 5, p. 130; *Edin.*, 1853. Cobbett, *Parl. Hist.*, vol. 1, col. 177. Fox calls this the first law for burning the

The Reformation was advancing, but it appeared at this moment as if the Reformer was on the eve of being crushed. He had many friends - every day was adding to their number - but they lacked courage, and remained in the background. His lectures at Oxford had planted the Gospel in the schools, the Bible which he had translated was planting it in the homes of England. But if the disciples of the Reformation multiplied, so too did the foes of the Reformer. The hierarchy had all along withstood and persecuted him, now the mailed hand of the king was raised to strike him.

When this was seen, all his friends fell away from him. John of Gaunt had deserted him at an earlier stage. This prince stood stoutly by Wicliffe so long as the Reformer occupied himself in simply repelling encroachments of the hierarchy upon the prerogatives of the crown and independence of the nation. That was a branch of the controversy the duke could understand. But when it passed into the doctrinal sphere, when the bold Reformer, not content with cropping off a few excrescences, began to lay the axe to the root - to deny the Sacrament and abolish the altar - the valiant prince was alarmed; he felt that he had stepped on ground which he did not know, and that he was in danger of being drawn into a bottomless pit of heresy. John of Gaunt, therefore, made all haste to draw off. But others too, of whom better things might have been expected, quailed before the gathering storm, and stood aloof from the Reformer. Dr. Nicholas Hereford, who had aided him in translating the Old Testament, and John Ashton, the most eloquent of those preachers whom Wicliffe had sent forth to traverse England, consulted their own safety rather than the defense of their leader, and the honour of the cause they had espoused.¹⁵ This conduct doubtless grieved, but did not dismay Wicliffe. Not an iota of heart or hope did he abate therefore. Nay, he chose this moment to make a forward movement, and to aim more terrible blows at the Papacy than any he had yet dealt it.

professors of religion. It was made by the clergy without the knowledge or consent of the Commons, in the fifth year of Richard II.

¹⁵Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 579. Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 2, pp. 109, 110.

Chapter 12: Wicliffe's Appeal to Parliament

Parliament meets—Wicliffe appears, and demands a Sweeping Reform—His Propositions touching the Monastic Orders—The Church's Temporalities—Transubstantiation—His growing Boldness—His Views find an echo in Parliament—The Persecuting Edict Repealed

Picture: High Street of Oxford (time of Wicliffe)

Picture: Wicliffe before the Convocation at Oxford

The Parliament met on the 19th November, 1382. ¹ Wicliffe could now prosecute his appeal to the king against the sentence of the university court, condemning his twelve propositions. But the prelates had been beforehand with him. They had inveigled the sovereign into lending them the sword of the State to wield at will against Wicliffe, and against all who should doubt the tremendous mystery of transubstantiation. Well, they might burn him tomorrow, but he lived today, and the doors of Parliament stood open. Wicliffe made haste to enter with his appeal and complaint. The hierarchy had secretly accused him to the king, he openly arraigns them before the Estates of the Realm.

The complaint presented by Wicliffe touched on four heads, and on each it demanded a very sweeping measure of reform. The first grievance to be abated or abolished was the monastic orders. The Reformer demanded that they should be released from the unnatural and immoral vow which made them the scandal of the Church, and the pests of society. "Since Jesus Christ shed His blood to free His Church," said Wicliffe, "I demand its freedom. I demand that every one may leave these gloomy walls [the convents] within which a tyrannical law prevails, and embrace a simple and peaceful life under the open vault of heaven."

The second part of the complaint had reference to the temporalities of the Church. The corruption and inefficiency of the clergy,

¹Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 580.

Wicliffe traced largely to their enormous wealth. That the clergy themselves would surrender these overgrown revenues he did not expect; he called, therefore, for the interference of the State, holding, despite the opposite doctrine promulgated by the priests, that both the property and persons of the priesthood were under the jurisdiction of the king. "Magistracy," he affirms, is "God's ordinance;" and he remarks that the Apostle Paul, "who putteth all men in subjection to kings, taketh out never a one." And analogous to this was the third part of the paper, which related to tithes and offerings. Let these, said Wicliffe, be remodeled. Let tithes and offerings be on a scale which shall be amply sufficient for the support of the recipients in the discharge of their sacred duties, but not such as to minister to their luxury and pride; and if a priest shall be found to be indolent or vicious, let neither tithe nor offering be given him. "I demand," he said, "that the poor inhabitants of our towns and villages be not constrained to furnish a worldly priest, often a vicious man and a heretic, with the means of satisfying his ostentation, his gluttony and his licentiousness - of buying a showy horse, costly saddles, bridles with tinkling bells, rich garments and soft furs, while they see the wives and children of their neighbors dying of hunger."²

The last part of the paper went deeper. It touched on doctrine, and on that doctrine which occupies a central place in the Romish system - transubstantiation. His own views on the dogma he did not particularly define in this appeal to Parliament, though he did so a little while after before the Convocation; he contented himself with craving liberty to have the true doctrine of the Eucharist, as given by Christ and His apostles, taught throughout England. In his *Triologus*, which was composed about this time, he takes a luminous view of the dogma of transubstantiation. Its effects, he believed, were peculiarly mischievous and far-extending. Not only was it an error, it was an error which enfeebled the understanding of the man who embraced it, and shook his confidence in the testimony of his senses, and so prepared the way for any absurdity or error, however much in opposition to reason or even to sense. The doctrine of the "real presence," understood in a corporeal sense, he declares

²Vaughan, vol. 2, p. 125. *A Complaint of John Wicliffe: Tracts and Treatises* edited by the Wicliffe Society, p. 268.

[120] to be the offspring of Satan, whom he pictures as reasoning thus while inventing it: "Should I once so far beguile the faithful of the Church, by the aid of Antichrist my vicegerent, as to persuade them to deny that this Sacrament is bread, and to induce them to regard it as merely an accident, there will be nothing then which I will not bring them to receive, since there can be nothing more opposite to the Scriptures, or to common discernment. Let the life of a prelate be then what it may, let him be guilty of luxury, simony, or murder, the people may be led to believe that he is really no such man - nay, they may then be persuaded to admit that the Pope is infallible, at least with respect to matters of Christian faith; and that, inasmuch as he is known by the name Most Holy Father, he is of course free from sin." ³

"It thus appears," says Dr. Vaughan, commenting on the above, "that the object of Wicliffe was to restore the mind of man to the legitimate guidance of reason and of the senses, in the study of Holy Writ, and in judging of every Christian institute; and that if the doctrine of transubstantiation proved peculiarly obnoxious to him, it was because that dogma was seen as in the most direct opposition to this generous design. To him it appeared that while the authority of the Church was so far submitted to as to involve the adoption of this monstrous tenet, no limit could possibly be assigned to the schemes of clerical imposture and oppression."

[121] The enemies of the Reformer must have been confounded by
 [122] this bold attack. They had persuaded themselves that the hour was come when Wicliffe must yield. Hereford, Repingdon, Ashton - all his friends, one after the other, had reconciled themselves to the hierarchy. The priests waited to see Wicliffe come forward, last of all, and bow his majestic head, and then they would lead him about in chains as a trophy of their victory, and a proof of the complete

³ *Dialogus*, lib. 4, cap. 7. Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 2, p. 131. "Hoc sacramentum venerabile," says Wicliffe, "est in natura sua verus panis et sacramentaliter corpus Christi" (*Dialogus*, p. 192) - naturally it is bread, sacramentally it is the body of Christ. "By this distinction," says Sharon Turner, "he removed from the most venerated part of religious worship the great provocative to infidelity; and preserved the English mind from that absolute rejection of Christianity which the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation has, since the thirteenth century, been so fatally producing in every country where it predominates, even among many of its teachers." (*Hist. of Eng.*, vol. 5, pp. 182, 183.)

suppression of the movement of Reform. He comes forward, but not to retract, not even to apologize, but with heart which grows only the stouter as his years increase and his enemies multiply, to reiterate his charges and again to proclaim in the face of the whole nation the corruption, tyranny, and errors of the hierarchy. His sentiments found an echo in the Commons, and Parliament repealed the persecuting edict which the priests and the king had surreptitiously passed. Thus the gain remained with Wicliffe

Chapter 13: Wicliffe Before Convocation in Person, and Before the Roman Curia by Letter

Convocation at Oxford—Wicliffe cited—Arraigned on the Question of Transubstantiation—Wicliffe Maintains and Reiterates the Teaching of his whole Life—He Arraigns his Judges—They are Dismayed—Wicliffe Retires Unmolested—Returns to Lutterworth—Cited by Urban VI. to Rome—Unable to go—Sends a Letter—A Faithful Admonition—Scene in the Vatican—Christ's and Antichrist's Portraits

Baffled before the Parliament, the primate turned to Convocation. Here he could more easily reckon on a subservient court. Courtenay had taken care to assemble, a goodly number of clergy to give eclat to the trial, and to be the spectators, as he fondly hoped, of the victory that awaited him. There were, besides the primate, six bishops, many doctors in divinity, and a host of inferior clergy. The concourse was swelled by the dignitaries and youth of Oxford. The scene where the trial took place must have recalled many memories to Wicliffe which could not but deeply stir him. It was now forty years since he had entered Oxford as a scholar; these halls had witnessed the toils of his youth and the labours of his manhood. Here had the most brilliant of his achievements been performed; here had his name been mentioned with honour, and his renown as a man of erudition and genius formed not the least constituent in the glory of his university. But this day Oxford opened her venerable gates to receive him in a new character. He came to be tried, perchance to be condemned; and, if his judges were able, to be delivered over to the civil power and punished as a heretic. The issue of the affair might be that that same Oxford which had borrowed a luster from his name would be lit up with the flames of his martyrdom.

The indictment turned specially upon transubstantiation. Did he affirm or deny that cardinal doctrine of the Church? The Reformer raised his venerable head in presence of the vast assembly; his eyes

sought out Courtenay, the archbishop, on whom he fixed a steady and searching gaze, and proceeded. In this, his last address before any court, he retracts nothing; he modifies nothing; he reiterates and confirms the whole teaching of his life on the question of the Eucharist. His address abounded in distinctions after the manner of that scholastic age, but it extorted praise for its unrivaled acuteness even from those who dissented from it. Throughout it Wicliffe unmistakably condemns the tenet of transubstantiation, affirming that the bread still continues bread, that there is no fleshly presence of Christ in the Sacrament, nor other presence save a sacramental and spiritual one. ¹

Wicliffe had defended himself with a rare acuteness, and with a courage yet more rare. But acquittal he will neither crave nor accept from such a court. In one of those transformations which it is given to only majestic moral natures to effect, he mounts the judgment-seat and places his judges at the bar. Smitten in their consciences, they sat chained to their seats, deprived of the power to rise and go away, although the words of the bold Reformer must have gone like burning arrows to their heart. “They were the heretics,” he said, “who affirmed that the Sacrament was an accident without a subject. Why did they propagate such errors? Why, because, like the priests of Baal, they wanted to vend their masses. With whom, think you,” he asked in closing, “are ye contending? with an old man on the brink of the grave? No! with Truth - Truth which is stronger than you, and will overcome you.” ² With these words he turned to leave the court. His enemies had not power to stop him. “Like his Divine

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¹Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 2, chap. 4. Wicliffe gave in two defenses or confessions to Convocation: one in Latin, suited to the taste of the learned, and characterised by the nice distinctions and subtle logic of the schools; the other in English, and adapted to the understandings of the common people. In both Wicliffe unmistakably repudiates transubstantiation. Those who have said that Wicliffe before the Convocation modified or retracted opinions he had formerly avowed, have misrepresented him, or, more probably, have misunderstood his statements and reasonings. He defends himself with the subtlety of a schoolman, but he retracts nothing; on the contrary, he re-asserts the precise doctrine for which William de Barton’s court had condemned him, and in the very terms in which he had formerly stated that doctrine. (See Appendix in Vaughan, Nos. 1, 2.)

²*Confessio Magistri Johannis Wycliff* - Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 2, Appendix, No. 6. 1008

Master at Nazareth," says D'Aubigne, "he passed through the midst of them."³ Leaving Oxford, he retired to his cure at Lutterworth.

Wicliffe must bear testimony at Rome also. It was Pope Urban, not knowing what he did, who arranged that the voice of this great witness, before becoming finally silent, should be heard speaking from the Seven Hills. One day about this time, as he was toiling with his pen in his quiet rectory - for his activity increased as his infirmities multiplied, and the night drew on in which he could not work - he received a summons from the Pontiff to repair to Rome, and answer for his heresy before the Papal See. Had he gone thither he certainly would never have returned. But that was not the consideration that weighed with Wicliffe. The hand of God had laid an arrest upon him. He had had a shock of palsy, and, had he attempted a journey so toilsome, would have died on the way long before he could have reached the gates of the Pontifical city. But though he could not go to Rome in person, he could go by letter, and thus the ends of Providence, if not the ends of Urban, would be equally served. The Pontiff and his conclave and, in short, all Christendom were to have another warning - another call to repentance - addressed to them before the Reformer should descend into the tomb.

John Wicliffe sat down in his rectory to speak, across intervening mountains and seas, to Urban of Rome. Than the epistle of the Rector of Lutterworth to the Pontiff of Christendom nothing can be imagined keener in its satire, yet nothing could have been more Christian and faithful in its spirit. Assuming Urban to be what Urban held himself to be, Wicliffe went on to say that there was no one before whom he could so joyfully appear as before Christ's Vicar, for by no one could he expect Christ's law to be more revered, or Christ's Gospel more loved. At no tribunal could he expect greater equity than that before which he now stood, and therefore if he had strayed from the Gospel, he was sure here to have his error proved to him, and the path of truth pointed out. The Vicar of Christ, he quietly assumes, does not affect the greatness of this world; oh, no; he leaves its pomps and vanities to worldly men, and contenting himself with the lowly estate of Him who while on earth had not

³D'Aubigne, *Hist. of Reform.*, vol 5, p. 132; Edin., 1853.

where to lay His head, he seeks no glory save the glory of resembling his Master. The “worldly lordship” he is compelled to bear is, he is sure, an unwelcome burden, of which he is fain to be rid. The Holy Father ceases not, doubtless, to exhort all his priests throughout Christendom to follow herein his own example, and to feed with the Bread of Life the flocks committed to their care. The Reformer closes by reiterating his willingness, if in aught he had erred, “to be meekly amended, if needs be, by death.”⁴

We can easily imagine the scowling faces amid which this letter was opened and read in the Vatican. Had Wicliffe indulged in vituperative terms, those to whom this epistle was addressed would have felt only assailed; as it was, they were arraigned, they felt themselves standing at the bar of the Reformer. With severe and truthful hand Wicliffe draws the portrait of Him whose servants Urban and his cardinals professed to be, and holding it up full in their sight, he asks, “Is this your likeness? Is this the poverty in which you live? Is this the humility you cultivate?” With the monuments of their pride on every hand - their palaces, their estates, their gay robes, their magnificent equipages, their luxurious tables - their tyranny the scourge and their lives the scandal of Christendom - they dared not say, “This is our likeness.” Thus were they condemned: but it was Christ who had condemned them. This was all that Urban had gained by summoning Wicliffe before him. He had but erected a pulpit on the Seven Hills, from the lofty elevation of which the English Reformer was able to proclaim, in the hearing of all the nations of Europe, that Rome was the Antichrist.

⁴Dr. Wicliffe’s Letter of Excuse to Urban VI. - Bibl. Bodl. MS. - Lewis, Life of Wiclif, Appendix, No. 23. Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 507; edit. 1684.

Chapter 14: Wicliffe's Last Days

Anticipation of a Violent Death—Wonderfully Shielded by
Events—Struck with Palsy—Dies December 31st, 1384—Estimate
of his Position and Work—Completeness of his Scheme of
Reform—The Father of the Reformation—The Founder of
England's Liberties

Picture: John Huss

When Wicliffe had indited and dispatched this letter, he had “finished his testimony.” It now remained only that he should rest a little while on earth, and then go up to his everlasting rest. He himself expected that his death would be by violence - that the chariot which should carry him to the skies would be a “chariot of fire.” The primate, the king, the Pope, all were working to compass his destruction; he saw the iron circle contracting day by day around him; a few months, or a few years, and it would close and crush him. That a man who defied the whole hierarchy, and who never gave way by so much as a foot-breadth, but was always pressing on in the battle, should die at last, not in a dungeon or at a stake, but in his own bed, was truly a marvel. He stood alone; he did not consult for his safety. But his very courage, in the hand of God, was his shield; for while meaner men were apprehended and compelled to recant, Wicliffe, who would burn but not recant, was left at liberty. “He that loveth his life shall lose it.” The political troubles of England, the rivalry of the two Popes, one event after another came to protect the life and prolong the labours of the Reformer, till his work attained at last a unity, a completeness, and a grandeur, which the more we contemplate it appears the more admirable. That it was the fixed purpose of his enemies to destroy him cannot be doubted; they thought they saw the opportune moment coming. But while they waited for it, and thought that now it was near, Wicliffe had departed, and was gone whither they could not follow.

On the last Sunday of the year 1384, he was to have dispensed the Eucharist to his beloved flock in the parish church of Lutterworth; and as he was in the act of consecrating the bread and wine, he was struck with palsy, and fell on the pavement. This was the third attack of the malady. He was affectionately borne to the rectory, laid on his bed, and died on the 31st of December, his life and the year closing together. How fitting a conclusion to his noble life! None of its years, scarcely any of its days, were passed unprofitably on the bed of sickness. The moment his great work was finished, that moment the Voice spake to him which said, "Come up hither." As he stood before the earthly symbols of his Lord's passion, a cloud suddenly descended upon him; and when its darkness had passed, and the light had returned, serener and more bright than ever was dawn or noon of earthly day, it was no memorial or symbol that he saw; it was his Lord Himself, in the august splendor of His glorified humanity. Blessed transition! The earthly sanctuary, whose gates he had that morning entered, became to him the vestibule of the Eternal Temple; and the Sabbath, whose services he had just commenced, became the dawn of a better Sabbath, to be closed by no evening with its shadows, and followed by no week-day with its toils.

If we can speak of one center where the light which is spreading over the earth, and which is destined one day to illuminate it all, originally arose, that center is England. And if to one man the honour of beginning that movement which is renewing the world can be ascribed beyond controversy, that man is John Wicliffe. He came out of the darkness of the Middle Ages - a sort of Melchisedek. He had no predecessor from whom he borrowed his plan of Church reform, and he had no successor in his office when he died; for it was not till more than 100 years that any other stood up in England to resume the work broken off by his death. Wicliffe stands apart, distinctly marked off from all the men in Christendom. Bursting suddenly upon a dark age, he stands before it in a light not borrowed from the schools, nor from the doctors of the Church, but from the Bible. He came preaching a scheme of re-institution and reformation so comprehensive, that no Reformer since has been able to add to it any one essential principle. On these solid grounds he is entitled to be regarded as the Father of the Reformation. With his rise the night

of Christendom came to an end, and the day broke which has ever since continued to brighten.

[125] Wicliffe possessed that combination of opposite qualities which marks the great man. As subtle as any schoolman of them all, he was yet as practical as any Englishman of the nineteenth century. With intuitive insight he penetrated to the root of all the evils that afflicted England, and with rare practical sagacity he devised and set agoing the true remedies. The evil he saw was ignorance, the remedy with which he sought to cure it was light. He translated the Bible, and he organized a body of preachers - simple, pious, earnest men - who knew the Gospel, and were willing to preach it at crossroads and in market-places, in city and village and rural lane - everywhere, in short. Before he died he saw that his labours had been successful to a degree he had not dared to hope. "His doctrine spread," said Knighton, his bitter enemy, "like suckers from the root of a tree." Wicliffe himself reckoned that a third of the priests of England were of his sentiment on the question of the Eucharist; and among the common people his disciples were innumerable. "You could not meet two men on the highway," said his enemies, "but one of them is a Wicliffite." ¹

The political measures which Parliament adopted at Wicliffe's advice, to guard the country against the usurpations of the Popes, show how deeply he saw into the constitution of the Papacy, as a political and worldly confederacy, wearing a spiritual guise only the better to conceal its true character and to gain its real object, which was to prey on the substance and devour the liberty of nations. Matters were rapidly tending to a sacerdotal autocracy. Christendom was growing into a kingdom of shorn and anointed men, with laymen as hewers of wood and drawers of water. Wicliffe said, "This shall not be;" and the best proof of his statesmanship is the fact that since his day all the other States of Europe, one after the other, have adopted the same measures of defense to which England had recourse in the fourteenth century. All of them, following in our wake, have passed laws to guard their throne, to regulate the appointment of bishops, to prevent the accumulation of property by religious houses, to restrict the introduction of bulls and briefs. They have done, in short, what

¹ Knighton. *De Eventibus Anglioe*, col 2663, 2665.

we did, though to less advantage, because they did it later in the day. England foresaw the evil and took precautions in time; other countries suffered it to come, and began to protect themselves only after it had all but effected their undoing.

It was under Wicliffe that English liberty had its beginnings. It is not the political constitution which has come out of the Magna Charta of King John and the barons, but the moral constitution which came out of that Divine Magna Charta, that Wicliffe gave her in the fourteenth century, which has been the sheet-anchor of England. The English Bible wrote, not merely upon the page of the Statute Book, but upon the hearts of the people of England, the two great commandments: Fear God; honour the king. These two sum up the whole duty of nations, and on these two hangs the prosperity of States. There is no mysterious or latent virtue in our political constitution which, as some seem to think, like a good genius protects us, and with invisible hand guides past our shores the tempests that cover other countries with the memorials of their devastating fury. The real secret of England's greatness is her permeation, at the very dawn of her history, with the principles of order and liberty by means of the English Bible, and the capacity for freedom thereby created. This has permitted the development, by equal stages, of our love for freedom and our submission to law; of our political constitution and our national genius; of our power and our self-control - the two sets of qualities fitting into one another, and growing into a well-compacted fabric of political and moral power unexampled on earth. If nowhere else is seen a similar structure, so stable and so lofty, it is because nowhere else has a similar basis been found for it. It was Wicliffe who laid that basis.

But above all his other qualities - above his scholastic genius, his intuitive insight into the working of institutions, his statesmanship - was his fearless submission to the Bible. It was in this that the strength of Wicliffe's wisdom lay. It was this that made him a Reformer, and that placed him in the first rank of Reformers. He held the Bible to contain a perfect revelation of the will of God, a full, plain, and infallible rule of both what man is to believe and what he is to do; and turning away from all other teachers, from the precedents of the thousand years which had gone before, from all the doctors and Councils of the Church, he placed himself before

the Word of God, and bowed to God's voice speaking in that Word, with the docility of a child.

[126] And the authority to which he himself so implicitly bowed, he called on all men to submit to. His aim was to bring men back to the Bible. The Reformer restored to the Church, first of all, the principle of authority. There must be a Divine and infallible authority in the Church. That authority cannot be the Church herself, for the guide and those whom he guides cannot be the same. The Divine infallible authority which Wicliffe restored for the guidance of men was the Bible - God speaking in His Word. And by setting up this Divine authority he displaced that human and fallible authority which the corruption of the ages had imposed upon the Church. He turned the eyes of men from Popes and Councils to the inspired oracles of God.²

Wicliffe, by restoring authority to the Church, restored to her liberty also. While he taught that the Bible was a sufficient and all-perfect rule, he taught also that every man had a right to interpret the Word of God for his own guidance, in a dependence upon the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. Thus he taught men to cast off that blind submission to the teaching of mere human authority, which is bondage, and to submit their understandings and consciences to God speaking in His Word, which alone is liberty.

These are the two first necessities of the Church of God - authority and liberty; an infallible Guide, and freedom to follow Him. These two must ever go together, the one cannot exist without the other. Without authority there can be no liberty, for liberty without order becomes anarchy; and without freedom there can be no Divine authority, for if the Church is not at liberty to obey the will of her Master, authority is overthrown. In the room of the rule of God is put the usurpation of man. Authority and freedom, like the twins of classic story, must together flourish or together die.

²“The Bible is the foundation deed of the Church, its charter: Wicliffe likes, with allusion to the Magna Charta, the fundamental deed of the civic liberty of his nation, to designate the Bible as the letter of freedom of the Church, as the deed of grace and promise given by God.” (Lechler, *De Ecclesia*.)

Chapter 15: Wicliffe's Theological and Church System

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His Theology drawn from the Bible solely—His Teaching embraced the Following Doctrines: The Fall—Man's Inability—Did not formulate his Views into a System—His "Postils"—His Views on Church Order and Government—Apostolic Arrangements his Model—His Personal Piety—Lechler's Estimate of him as a Reformer

Picture: View of Prague

Standing before the Bible, Wicliffe forgot all the teaching of man. For centuries before his day the human mind had been busy in the field of theology. Systems had been invented and built up; the glosses of doctors, the edicts of Councils, and the bulls of Popes had been piled one above the other till the structure looked imposing indeed. Wicliffe dug down through it all till he came to the first foundations, to those even which the hands of prophets and apostles had laid. Hence the apostolic simplicity and purity of his doctrine. ¹ With all the early Fathers he gave prominence to the free grace of God in the matter of man's salvation; in fact, he ascribed it entirely to grace. He taught man was fallen through Adam's transgression; that he was utterly unable to do the will of God, or to merit Divine favor or forgiveness, by his own power. He taught the eternal Godhead of Christ - very God and very man; His substitution in the room of the guilty; His work of obedience; His sacrifice upon the cross, and the free justification of the sinner through faith in that sacrifice. "Here we must know," says he, "the story of the old law... As a right

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¹ Above all, Wicliffe holds up to view that the preaching of the Word of God is that instrumentality which very specially serves to the edification of the Church, because God's Word is seed (Luke 8:11). "Oh, astonishing power of the Divine seed," exclaims Wicliffe, "which conquers the strong-armed man, softens hard hearts, and renews and changes into godly men those who have become brutalised by sin, and wandered to an infinite distance from God! Evidently no priest's word could work such a great wonder, if the Spirit of Life and the Eternal Word did not co-operate." (Lechler, vol. 1, p. 395.)

looking on that adder of brass saved the people from the venom of serpents, so a right looking by full belief on Christ saveth His people. Christ died not for His own sins as thieves do for theirs, but as our Brother, who Himself might not sin, He died for the sins that others had done.”²

What Wicliffe did in the field of theology was not to compile a system, but to give a plain exposition of Scripture; to restore to the eyes of men, from whom they had long been hidden, those truths which are for the healing of their souls. He left it for those who should come after him to formulate the doctrines which he deduced from the inspired page. Traversing the field of revelation, he plucked its flowers all fresh as they grew, regaling himself and his flock therewith, but bestowing no pains on their classification.

Of the sermons, or “postils,” of Wicliffe, some 300 remain. The most of these have now been given to the world through the press, and they enable us to estimate with accuracy the depth and comprehensiveness of the Reformer’s views. The men of the sixteenth century had not the materials for judging which we possess; and their estimate of Wicliffe as a theologian, we humbly think, did him no little injustice. Melancthon, for instance, in a letter to Myconius, declared him to be ignorant of the “righteousness of faith.” This judgment is excusable in the circumstances in which it was formed; but it is not the less untrue, for the passages adduced above make it unquestionable that Wicliffe both knew and taught the doctrine of God’s grace, and of man’s free justification through faith in the righteousness of Christ.³

The early models of Church government and order Wicliffe also dug up from underneath the rubbish of thirteen centuries. He maintained that the Church was made up of the whole body of the faithful; he discarded the idea that the clergy alone are the Church; the laity, he held, are equally an essential part of it; nor ought there to be, he held, among its ministers, gradation of rank or official pre-eminence.

²Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 2, p. 356.

³The same excuse cannot be made for Dorner. His brief estimate of the great English Reformer is not made with his usual discrimination, scarce with his usual fairness. He says: “The deeper religious spirit is wanting in his ideas of reform.” “He does not yet know the nature of justification, and does not yet know the free grace of God.” (*History of Protestant Theology*, vol. 1, p. 66; Edin., 1871.)

The indolence, pride, and dissensions which reigned among the clergy of his day, he viewed as arising from violation of the law of the Gospel, which declares "it were better for the clerks to be all of one estate." "From the faith of the Scriptures," says he in his *Trialogus*, "it seems to me to be sufficient that there should be presbyters and deacons holding that state and office which Christ has imposed on them, since it appears certain that these degrees and orders have their origin in the pride of Caesar." And again he observes, "I boldly assert one thing, namely, that in the primitive Church, or in the time of Paul, two orders of the clergy were sufficient - that is, a priest and a deacon. In like manner I affirm that in the time of Paul, the presbyter and bishop were names of the same office. This appears from the third chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy, and in the first chapter of the Epistle to Titus." ⁴

As regards the claims of the clergy alone to form the Church, and to wield ecclesiastical power, Wicliffe thus expresses himself: "When men speak of Holy Church, anon, they understand prelates and priests, with monks, and canons, and friars, and all men who have tonsures, though they live accursedly, and never so contrary to the law of God. But they call not the seculars men of Holy Church, though they live never so truly, according to God's law, and die in perfect charity... Christian men, taught in God's law, call Holy Church the congregation of just men, for whom Jesus Christ shed His blood, and not mere stones and timber and earthly dross, which the clerks of Antichrist magnify more than the righteousness of God, and the souls of men." ⁵ Before Wicliffe could form these opinions he had to forget the age in which he lived, and place himself in the midst of apostolic times; he had to emancipate himself from the prestige which a venerable antiquity gave to the institutions around him, and seek his model and principles in the Word of God. It was an act of stupendous obedience done in faith, but by that act he became the pioneer of the Reformation, and the father of all those, in any age or country, who confess that, in their efforts after Reformation, they seek a "City" which hath its "foundations" in the teachings of prophets and apostles, and whose "Builder and Maker" is the

⁴Vaughan, *Life of John de Wicliffe*, vol. 2, pp. 309, 310.

⁵*Sentence of the Curse Expounded*, chap. 2.

[129] Spirit of God. “That whole circle of questions,” says Dr. Hanna, “concerning the canon of Scripture, the authority of Scripture, and the right of private interpretation of Scripture, with which the later controversies of the Reformation have made us so familiar, received their first treatment in this country at Wicliffe’s hands. In conducting this fundamental controversy, Wicliffe had to lay all the foundations with his own unaided hand. And it is no small praise to render to his work to say that it was even as he laid them, line for line, and stone for stone, that they were relaid by the master builders of the Reformation.”⁶

Of his personal piety there can be no doubt. There remain, it is true, scarce any memorials, written or traditional, of his private life; but his public history is an enduring monument of his personal Christianity. Such a life nothing could have sustained save a deep conviction of the truth, a firm trust in God, a love to the Savior, and an ardent desire for the salvation of men. His private character, we know, was singularly pure; none of the vices of the age had touched him; as a pastor he was loving and faithful, and as a patriot he was enlightened, incorruptible, and courageous. His friends fell away, but the Reformer never hesitated, never wavered. His views continued to grow, and his magnanimity and zeal grew with them. Had he sought fame, or wealth, or promotion, he could not but have seen that he had taken the wrong road: privation and continual sacrifice only could he expect in the path he had chosen. He acted on the maxim which he taught to others, that “if we look for an earthly reward our hope of eternal life perisheth.”

His sermons afford us a glimpse into his study at Lutterworth, and show us how his hours there were passed, even in meditation on God’s Word, and communion with its Author. These are remarkable productions, expressed in vigorous rudimentary English, with no mystic haze in their thinking, disencumbered from the phraseology of the schools, simple and clear as the opening day, and fragrant as the breath of morning. They burst suddenly upon us like a ray of pure light from the very heart of the darkness, telling us that God’s Word in all ages is Light, and that the Holy Spirit has ever been

⁶Hanna, Wicliffe and the Huguenots, p. 116.

present in the Church to discharge His office of leading “into all truth” those who are willing to submit their minds to His guidance.

“If we look from Wicliffe,” says Lechler, “backwards, in order to compare him with the men before him, and arrive at a scale of measurement for his own power, the fact is brought before us that Wicliffe concentratedly represented that movement towards reform of the foregoing centuries, which the degeneracy of the Church, arising from its secular possessions and simonies, rendered necessary. That which, in Gregory VII.’s time, Arnold of Brescia, and the community of the Waldenses, Francis of Assisi, and the begging orders of the Minorites strove after, what the holy Bernard of Clairvaux longed for, the return of the Church to apostolic order, that filled Wicliffe’s soul specially at the beginning of his public career... In the collective history of the Church of Christ Wicliffe makes an epoch, in so far as he is the first reforming personality.

Before him arose, it is true, here and there many schemes and active endeavors, which led also to dissensions and collisions, and ultimately to the formation of separate communities; but Wicliffe is the first important personality who devoted himself to the work of Church reform with the whole bent of his mind, with all the thinking power of a superior intellect, and the full force of will and joyful self-devotion of a man in Christ Jesus. He worked at this his

life long, out of an earnest, conscientious impulse, and in the confident trust that the work is not in vain in the Lord ([1 Corinthians 15:58](#)). He did not conceal from himself that the endeavors of evangelical men would in the first place be combated, persecuted, and repressed. Notwithstanding this, he consoled himself with the thought that it would yet come in the end to a renewing of the Church according to the apostolic pattern.”

“How far Wicliffe’s thoughts have been, first of all, rightly understood, faithfully preserved, and practically valued, till at last all that was true and well proved in them deepened and strengthened, and were finally established in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, must be proved by the history of the following generations.”⁷

Wicliffe, had he lived two centuries later, would very probably have been to England what Luther was to Germany, and Knox to

⁷Lechler, Johann von Wiclif, vol. 2, pp. 741, 742.

Scotland. His appearance in the fourteenth century enabled him to discharge an office that in some respects was higher, and to fill a position that is altogether unique in the religious history of Christendom. With Wicliffe the world changes from stagnancy to progress. Wicliffe introduces the era of moral revivals. He was the Forerunner of all the Reformers, and the Father of all the Reformations of Christendom.

Book 3: John Huss and the Hussite Wars

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Chapter 1: Birth, Education, and First Labours of Huss

Bohemia—Introduction of the Gospel—Wicliffe's Writings—Pioneers—Militz, Stiekna, Janovius—Charles IV—Huss—Birth and Education—Prague—Bethlehem Chapel

Picture: Soldiers Searching for Bohemian Protestants

Picture: The Miracle at Wilsnach: People flocking to the Church

In spring-time does the husbandman begin to prepare for the harvest. He turns field after field with the plough, and when all have been got ready for the processes that are to follow, he returns on his steps, scattering as he goes the precious seed on the open furrows. His next care is to see to the needful operations of weeding and cleaning. All the while the sun this hour, and the shower the next, are promoting the germination and growth of the plant. The husbandman returns a third time, and lo! over all his fields there now waves the yellow ripened grain. It is harvest.

So was it with the Heavenly Husbandman when He began His preparations for the harvest of Christendom. For while to the ages that came after it the Reformation was the spring-time, it yet, to the ages that went before it, stood related as the harvest.

We have witnessed the great Husbandman ploughing one of His fields, England namely, as early as the fourteenth century. The war that broke out in that age with France, the political conflicts into which the nation was plunged with the Papacy, the rise of the universities with the mental fermentation that followed, broke up the ground. The soil turned, the Husbandman sent forth a skillful and laborious servant to cast into the furrows of the ploughed land the seed of the translated Bible. So far had the work advanced. At this stage it stopped, or appeared to do so. Alas! we exclaim, that all this labor should be thrown away! But it is not so. The laborer is withdrawn, but the seed is not: it lies in the soil; and while it is silently germinating, and working its way hour by hour

towards the harvest, the Husbandman goes elsewhere and proceeds to plough and sow another of His fields. Let us cast our eyes over wide Christendom. What do we see? Lo! yonder in the far-off East is the same preparatory process begun which we have already traced in England. Verily, the Husbandman is wisely busy. In Bohemia the plough is at work, and already the sowers have come forth and have begun to scatter the seed.

In transferring ourselves to Bohemia we do not change our subject, although we change our country. It is the same great drama under another sky. Surely the winter is past, and the great spring time has come, when, in lands lying so widely apart, we see the flowers beginning to appear, and the fountains to gush forth.

We read in the Book of the Persecutions of the Bohemian Church: "In the year A.D. 1400, Jerome of Prague returned from England, bringing with him the writings of Wicliffe." ¹ "A Taborite chronicler of the fifteenth century, Nicholaus von Pelhrimow, testifies that the books of the evangelical doctor, Master John Wicliffe, opened the eyes of the blessed Master John Huss, as several reliable men know from his own lips, whilst he read and re-read them together with his followers." ²

Such is the link that binds together Bohemia and England. Already Protestantism attests its true catholicity. Oceans do not stop its progress. The boundaries of States do not limit its triumphs. On every soil is it destined to flourish, and men of every tongue will it enroll among its disciples. The spiritually dead who are in their graves are beginning to hear the voice of Wicliffe - yea, rather of Christ speaking through Wicliffe - and to come forth.

The first drama of Protestantism was acted and over in Bohemia before it had begun in Germany. So prolific in tragic incident and heroic character was this second drama, that it is deserving of more attention than it has yet received. It did not last long, but during its career it shed a resplendent luster upon the little Bohemia. It transformed its people into a nation of heroes. It made their wisdom in council the admiration of Europe, and their prowess on the field the terror of all the neighboring States. It gave, moreover, a presage

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¹Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, cap. 8, 5; *Lugduni Batavorum*, 1647.

²Hoeffler, *Hussite Movement*, vol. 2, p. 593. Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 2, p. 140.

of the elevation to which human character should attain, and the splendor that would gather round history, what time Protestantism should begin to display its regenerating influence on a wider area than that to which until now it had been restricted.

It is probable that Christianity first entered Bohemia in the wake of the armies of Charlemagne. But the Western missionaries, ignorant of the Slavonic tongue, could effect little beyond a nominal conversion of the Bohemian people. Accordingly we find the King of Moravia, a country whose religious condition was precisely similar to that of Bohemia, sending to the Greek emperor, about the year 863, and saying: "Our land is baptized, but we have no teachers to instruct us, and translate for us the Holy Scriptures. Send us teachers who may explain to us the Bible."³ Methodius and Cyrillus were sent; the Bible was translated, and Divine worship established in the Slavonic language.

The ritual in both Moravia and Bohemia was that of the Eastern Church, from which the missionaries had come. Methodius made the Gospel be preached in Bohemia. There followed a great harvest of converts; families of the highest rank crowded to baptism, and churches and schools arose everywhere.⁴

Though practicing the Eastern ritual, the Bohemian Church remained under the jurisdiction of Rome; for the great schism between the Eastern and the Western Churches had not yet been consummated. The Greek liturgy, as we may imagine, was displeasing to the Pope, and he began to plot its overthrow. Gradually the Latin rite was introduced, and the Greek rite in the same proportion displaced. At length, in 1079, Gregory VII. (Hildebrand) issued a bull forbidding the Oriental ritual to be longer observed, or public worship celebrated in the tongue of the country. The reasons assigned by the Pontiff for the use of a tongue which the people did not understand, in their addresses to the Almighty, are such as would not, readily occur to ordinary men. He tells his "dear son," the King of Bohemia, that after long study of the Word of God, he had come to see that it was pleasing to the Omnipotent that His worship should be cel-

³Nestor, *Annals*, pp. 20 - 23; St. Petersburg edit., 1767; apud Count Valerian Krasinski, *Slavonia*, pp. 36, 37.

⁴Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, cap. 1, 1. *Centuriatores Madgeburgenses*, *Hist. Eccles.*, tom. 3, p. 8; Basiliae, 1624.

ebred in an unknown language, and that many evils and heresies had arisen from not observing this rule. ⁵

This missive closed in effect every church, and every Bible, and left the Bohemians, so far as any public instruction was concerned, in total night. The Christianity of the nation would have sunk under the blow, but for another occurrence of an opposite tendency which happened soon afterwards. It was now that the Waldenses and Albigenses, fleeing from the sword of persecution in Italy and France, arrived in Bohemia. Thaurus informs us that Peter Waldo himself was among the number of these evangelical exiles.

Reynerius, speaking of the middle of the thirteenth century, says: "There is hardly any country in which this sect is not to be found." If the letter of Gregory was like a hot wind to wither the Bohemian Church, the Waldensian refugees were a secret dew to revive it. They spread themselves in small colonies over all the Slavonic countries, Poland included; they made their head-quarters at Prague. They were zealous evangelizers, not daring to preach in public, but teaching in private houses, and keeping alive the truth during the two centuries which were yet to run before Huss should appear.

It was not easy enforcing the commands of the Pope in Bohemia, lying as it did remote from Rome. In many places worship continued to be celebrated in the tongue of the people, and the Sacrament to be dispensed in both kinds. The powerful nobles were in many cases the protectors of the Waldenses and native Christians; and for these benefits they received a tenfold recompense in the good order and prosperity which reigned on the lands that were occupied by professors of the evangelical doctrines. All through the fourteenth century, these Waldensian exiles continued to sow the seed of a pure Christianity in the soil of Bohemia.

All great changes prognosticate themselves. The revolutions that happen in the political sphere never fail to make their advent felt. Is it wonderful that in every country of Christendom there were men who foretold the approach of a great moral and spiritual revolution? In Bohemia were three men who were the pioneers of Huss; and

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⁵See the Pontiff's letter in Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, pp. 16, 17. The following is an extract: - "Saepe enim meditantem Scripturam Sacram, comperimus, omnipotenti Deo Idacuisse, et placere, cultum sacrum lingua arcana peragi, ne a quibus vis promiscue, praesertim rudioribus, intelligatur.".... *Datae Romae, etc., Anno 1079.*

who, in terms more or less plain, foretold the advent of a greater champion than themselves. The first of these was John Milicius, or Militz, Archdeacon and Canon of the Archiepiscopal Cathedral of the Hradschin, Prague. He was a man of rare learning, of holy life, and an eloquent preacher. When he appeared in the pulpit of the cathedral church, where he always used the tongue of the people, the vast edifice was thronged with a most attentive audience. He inveighed against the abuses of the clergy rather than against the false doctrines of the Church, and he exhorted the people to Communion in both kinds. He went to Rome, in the hope of finding there, in a course of fasting and tears, greater rest for his soul. But, alas! the scandals of Prague, against which he had thundered in the pulpit of Hradschin, were forgotten in the greater enormities of the Pontifical city. Shocked at what he saw in Rome, he wrote over the door of one of the cardinals, "Antichrist is now come, and sitteth in the Church,"⁶ and departed. The Pope, Gregory XI., sent after him a bull, addressed to the Archbishop of Prague, commanding him to seize and imprison the bold priest who had affronted the Pope in his own capital, and at the very threshold of the Vatican.

[133] No sooner had Milicius returned home than the archbishop proceeded to execute the Papal mandate. But murmurs began to be heard among the citizens, and fearing a popular outbreak the archbishop opened the prison doors, and Milicius, after a short incarceration, was set at liberty. He survived his eightieth year, and died in peace, A.D. 1374.⁷

His colleague, Conrad Stiekna - a man of similar character and great eloquence, and whose church in Prague was so crowded, he was obliged to go outside and preach in the open square - died before him. He was succeeded by Matthew Janovius, who not only thundered in the pulpit of the cathedral against the abuses of the Church, but traveled through Bohemia, preaching everywhere against the iniquities of the times. This drew the eyes of Rome upon him. At the instigation of the Pope, persecution was commenced against the confessors in Bohemia. They durst not openly celebrate the Communion in both kinds, and those who desired to partake

⁶"Antichristus jam venit, et in Ecclesia sedet." (Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 21.) Some say that the words were written on the portals of St. Peter's.

⁷Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 21.

of the “cup,” could enjoy the privilege only in private dwellings, or in the yet greater concealment of woods and caves. It fared hard with them when their places of retreat were discovered by the armed bands which were sent upon their track. Those who could not manage to escape were put to the sword, or thrown into rivers. At length the stake was decreed (1376) against all who dissented from the established rites. These persecutions were continued till the times of Huss.⁸ Janovius, who “taught that salvation was only to be found by faith in the crucified Savior,” when dying (1394) consoled his friends with the assurance that better times were in store. “The rage of the enemies of the truth,” said he, “now prevails against us, but it will not be for ever; there shall arise one from among the common people, without sword or authority, and against him they shall not be able to prevail.”⁹

Politically, too, the country of Bohemia was preparing for the great part it was about to act. Charles I., better known in Western Europe as Charles IV., Emperor of Germany, and author of the Golden Bull, had some time before ascended the throne. He was an enlightened and patriotic ruler. The friend of Petrarch and the protector of Janovius, he had caught so much of the spirit of the great poet and of the Bohemian pastor, as to desire a reform of the ecclesiastical estate, especially in the enormous wealth and overgrown power of the clergy. In this, however, he could effect nothing; on the contrary, Rome had the art to gain his concurrence in her persecuting measures. But he had greater success in his efforts for the political and material amelioration of his country. He repressed the turbulence of the nobles; he cleared the highways of the robbers who infested them; and now the husbandman being able to sow and reap in peace, and the merchant to pass from town to town in safety, the country began to enjoy great prosperity. Nor did the labours of the sovereign stop here. He extended the municipal libraries of the towns, and in 1347 he founded a university in Prague, on the model of those of Bologna and Paris; filling its chairs with eminent scholars, and endowing it with ample funds. He specially patronized those authors who wrote in the Bohemian tongue, judging that there

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⁸Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 23.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 24.

was no more effectual way of invigorating the national intellect, than by cultivating the national language and literature. Thus, while in other countries the Reformation helped to purify and ennoble the national language, by making it the vehicle of the sublimest truths, in Bohemia this process was reversed, and the development of the Bohemian tongue prepared the way for the entrance of Protestantism.¹⁰

Although the reign of Charles IV. was an era of peace, and his efforts were mainly directed towards the intellectual and material prosperity of Bohemia, he took care, nevertheless, that the martial spirit of his subjects should not decline; and thus when the tempest burst in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and the anathemas of Rome were seconded by the armies of Germany, the Bohemian people were not unprepared for the tremendous struggle which they were called to wage for their political and religious liberties.

Before detailing that struggle, we must briefly sketch the career of the man who so powerfully contributed to create in the breasts of his countrymen that dauntless spirit which bore them up till victory crowned their arms. John Huss was born on the 6th of July, 1373, in the market town of Hussinetz, on the edge of the Bohemian forest near the source of the Moldau river, and the Bavarian boundary.¹¹ He took his name from the place of his birth. His parents were poor, but respectable. His father died when he was young. His mother, when his education was finished at the provincial school, took him to Prague, to enter him at the university of that city. She carried a present to the rector, but happening to lose it by the way, and grieved by the misfortune, she knelt down beside her son, and implored upon him the blessing of the Almighty.¹² The prayers of the mother were heard, though the answer came in a way that would have pierced her heart like a sword, had she lived to witness the issue.

The university career of the young student, whose excellent talents sharpened and expanded day by day, was one of great brilliance. His face was pale and thin; his consuming passion was a desire for knowledge; blameless in life, sweet and affable in address, he won upon all who came in contact with him. He was made Bachelor of

¹⁰Krasinski, *Religious History of the Slavonic Nations*, pp. 49, 50; Edin., 1849.

¹¹Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 2, p. 133.

¹²Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 1, p. 70; Edin., 1844.

Arts in 1393, Bachelor of Theology in 1394, Master of Arts in 1396; Doctor of Theology he never was, any more than Melanchthon. Two years after becoming Master of Arts, he began to hold lectures in the university. Having finished his university course, he entered the Church, where he rose rapidly into distinction. By-and-by his fame reached the court of Wenceslaus, who had succeeded his father, Charles IV., on the throne of Bohemia. His queen, Sophia of Bavaria, selected Huss as her confessor.

He was at this time a firm believer in the Papacy. The philosophical writings of Wicliffe he already knew, and had ardently studied; but his theological treatises he had not seen. He was filled with unlimited devotion for the grace and benefits of the Roman Church; for he tells us that he went at the time of the Prague Jubilee, 1393, to confession in the Church of St. Peter, gave the last four groschen that he possessed to the confessor, and took part in the processions in order to share also in the absolution - an efflux of superabundant devotion of which he afterwards repented, as he himself acknowledged from the pulpit. ¹³

The true career of John Huss dates from about A.D. 1402, when he was appointed preacher to the Chapel of Bethlehem. This temple had been founded in the year 1392 by a certain citizen of Prague, Mulhamio by name, who laid great stress upon the preaching of the Word of God in the mother-tongue of the people. On the death or the resignation of its first pastor, Stephen of Colonia, Huss was elected his successor. His sermons formed an epoch in Prague. The moral condition of that capital was then deplorable. According to Comenius, all classes wallowed in the most abominable vices. The king, the nobles, the prelates, the clergy, the citizens, indulged without restraint in avarice, pride, drunkenness, lewdness, and every profligacy. ¹⁴ In the midst of this sunken community stood up Huss, like an incarnate conscience. Now it was against the prelates, now against the nobles, and now against the ordinary clergy that he launched his bolts. These sermons seem to have benefited the preacher as well as the hearers, for it was in the course of their preparation and delivery that Huss became inwardly awakened. A

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¹³Chronicon Universitatis Pragensis apud Lechler, Johann von Wiclif, vol 2, p. 136.

¹⁴Comenius, Persecut. Eccles. Bohem., p. 25.

great clamor arose. But the queen and the archbishop protected Huss, and he continued preaching with indefatigable zeal in his Chapel of Bethlehem,¹⁵ founding all he said on the Scriptures, and appealing so often to them, that it may be truly affirmed of him that he restored the Word of God to the knowledge of his countrymen.

The minister of Bethlehem Chapel was then bound to preach on all church days early and after dinner (in Advent and fast times only in the morning), to the common people in their own language. Obligated to study the Word of God, and left free from the performance of liturgical acts and pastoral duties, Huss grew rapidly in the knowledge of Scripture, and became deeply imbued with its spirit. While around him was a daily-increasing devout community, he himself grew in the life of faith. By this time he had become acquainted with the theological works of Wicliffe, which he earnestly studied, and learned to admire the piety of their author, and to be not wholly opposed to the scheme of reform which he had promulgated.¹⁶

Already Huss had commenced a movement, the true character of which he did not perceive, and the issue of which he little foresaw. He placed the Bible above the authority of Pope or Council, and thus he had entered, without knowing it, the road of Protestantism. But as yet he had no wish to break with the Church of Rome, nor did he dissent from a single dogma of her creed, the one point of divergence to which we have just referred excepted; but he had taken a step which, if he did not retrace it, would lead him in due time far enough from her communion.

The echoes of a voice which had spoken in England, but was now silent there, had already reached the distant country of Bohemia. We have narrated above the arrival of a young student in Prague, with copies of the works of the great English heresiarch. Other causes favored the introduction of Wicliffe's books. One of these was the marriage of Richard

II. of England, with Anne, sister of the King of Bohemia, and the consequent intercourse between the two countries. On the death

¹⁵Bethlehem Chapel - the House of Bread, because its founder meant that there the people should be fed upon the Bread of Life.

¹⁶Hoefler, *Hist. of Hussite Movement*; apud Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol 2, p. 140, foot-note.

of that princess, the ladies of her court, on their return to their native land, brought with them the writings of the great Reformer, whose disciple their mistress had been. The university had made Prague a center of light, and the resort of men of intelligence. Thus, despite the corruption of the higher classes, the soil was not unprepared for the reception and growth of the opinions of the Rector of Lutterworth, which now found entrance within the walls of the Bohemian capital.

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¹⁷“Huss copied out Wicliffe’s *Triologus* for the Margrave Jost of Moravia, and others of noble rank, and translated it for the benefit of the laity, and even women, into the Czech language. A manuscript in Huss’s handwriting, and embracing five philosophical tractates of Wicliffe, is to be found in the Royal Library at Stockholm, having been carried away with many others by the Swedes out of Bohemia at the end of the Thirty Years’ War. This MS. was finished, as the concluding remark proves, in 1400, the same year in which Jerome of Prague returned from England.” (Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 2, p. 113.)

Chapter 2: Huss Begins his Warfare Against Rome

The Two Frescoes—The University of Prague—Exile of Huss—Return—Arrival of Jerome—The Two Yoke-fellows—The Rival Popes, etc

Picture: Destruction of the Works of Wicliffe at Prague

Picture: Jerome of Prague

[136] An incident which is said to have occurred at this time (1404) contributed to enlarge the views of Huss, and to give strength to the movement he had originated in Bohemia. There came to Prague two theologians from England, James and Conrad of Canterbury. Graduates of Oxford, and disciples of the Gospel, they had crossed the sea to spread on the banks of the Moldau the knowledge they had learned on those of the Isis. Their plan was to hold public disputations, and selecting the Pope's primacy, they threw down the gage of battle to its maintainers. The country was hardly ripe for such a warfare, and the affair coming to the ears of the authorities, they promptly put a stop to the discussions. Arrested in their work, the two visitors did not fail to consider by what other way they could carry out their mission. They bethought them that they had studied art as well as theology, and might now press the pencil into their service. Having obtained their host's leave, they proceeded to give a specimen of their skill in a drawing in the corridor of the house in which they resided. On the one wall they portrayed the humble entrance of Christ into Jerusalem, "meek, and riding upon an ass." On the other they displayed the more than royal magnificence of a Pontifical cavalcade. There was seen the Pope, adorned with triple crown, attired in robes bespangled with gold, and all lustrous with precious stones. He rode proudly on a richly caparisoned horse, with trumpeters proclaiming his approach, and a brilliant crowd of cardinals and bishops following in his rear.

In an age when printing was unknown, and preaching nearly as much so, this was a sermon, and a truly eloquent and graphic one.

Many came to gaze, and to mark the contrast presented between the lowly estate of the Church's Founder, and the overgrown haughtiness and pride of His pretended vicar.¹ The city of Prague was moved, and the excitement became at last so great, that the English strangers deemed it prudent to withdraw. But the thoughts they had awakened remained to ferment in the minds of the citizens.

Among those who came to gaze at this antithesis of Christ and Antichrist was John Huss; and the effect of it upon him was to lead him to study more carefully than ever the writings of Wicliffe. He was far from able at first to concur in the conclusions of the English Reformer. Like a strong light thrown suddenly upon a weak eye, the bold views of Wicliffe, and the sweeping measure of reform which he advocated, alarmed and shocked Huss. The Bohemian preacher had appealed to the Bible, but he had not bowed before it with the absolute and unreserved submission of the English pastor. To overturn the hierarchy, and replace it with the simple ministry of the Word; to sweep away all the teachings of tradition, and put in their room the doctrines of the New Testament, was a revolution for which, though marked alike by its simplicity and its sublimity, Huss was not prepared. It may be doubted whether, even when he came to stand at the stake, Huss's views had attained the breadth and clearness of those of Wicliffe.

Lying miracles helped to open the eyes of Huss still farther, and to aid his movement. In the church at Wilsnack, near the lower Elbe, there was a pretended relic of the blood of Christ. Many wonderful cures were reported to have been done by the holy blood. People flocked thither, not only out of the neighboring countries, but also from those at a greater distance - Poland, Hungary, and even Scandinavia. In Bohemia itself there were not wanting numerous pilgrims who went to Wilsnack to visit the wonderful relic. Many doubts were expressed about the efficacy of the blood. The Archbishop of Prague appointed a commission of three masters, among whom was Huss, to investigate the affair, and to inquire into the truth of the miracles said to have been wrought. The examination of the persons on whom the alleged miracles had been performed, proved that they were simply impostures. One boy was said to have had a sore foot

¹Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, pp. 27, 28. Krasinski, *Slavonia*, p. 60.

cured by the blood of Wilsnack, but the foot on examination was found, instead of being cured, to be worse than before. Two blind women were said to have recovered their sight by the virtue of the blood; but, on being questioned, they confessed that they had had sore eyes, but had never been blind; and so as regarded other alleged cures. As the result of the investigation, the archbishop issued a mandate in the summer of 1405, in which all preachers were enjoined, at least once a month, to publish to their congregations the episcopal prohibition of pilgrimages to the blood of Wilsnack, under pain of excommunication.²

[137] Huss was able soon after (1409) to render another service to his nation, which, by extending his fame and deepening his influence among the Bohemian people, paved the way for his great work. Crowds of foreign youth flocked to the University of Prague, and their numbers enabled them to monopolize its emoluments and honors, to the partial exclusion of the Bohemian students. By the original constitution of the university the Bohemians possessed three votes, and the other nations united only one. In process of time this was reversed; the Germans usurped three of the four votes, and the remaining one alone was left to the native youth. Huss protested against this abuse, and had influence to obtain its correction. An edict was passed, giving three votes to the Bohemians, and only one to the Germans. No sooner was this decree published, than the German professors and students - to the number, say some, of 40,000; but according to Aeneas Sylvius, a contemporary, of 5,000 - left Prague, having previously bound themselves to this step by oath, under pain of having the two first fingers of their right hand cut off. Among these students were not a few on whom had shone, through Huss, the first rays of Divine knowledge, and who were instrumental in spreading the light over Germany. Elevated to the rectorship of the university, Huss was now, by his greater popularity and higher position, abler than ever to propagate his doctrines.³

What was going on at Prague could not long remain unknown at Rome. On being informed of the proceedings in the Bohemian capital, the Pope, Alexander V., fulminated a bull, in which he

²Hoefler, *Hist. of Hussite Movement*; apud *Concilla Pragensia*.

³Krasinski, *Slavonia*, pp. 56, 57. Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 1, p. 78. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, p. 119.

commanded the Archbishop of Prague, Sbinko, with the help of the secular authorities, to proceed against all who preached in private chapels, and who read the writings or taught the opinions of Wicliffe. There followed a great auto da fe, not of persons but of books. Upwards of 200 volumes, beautifully written, elegantly bound, and ornamented with precious stones - the works of John Wicliffe - were, by the order of Sbinko, piled upon the street of Prague, and, amid the tolling bells, publicly burned. ⁴ Their beauty and costliness showed that their owners were men of high position; and their number, collected in one city alone, attests how widely circulated were the writings of the English Reformer on the continent of Europe.

This act but the more inflamed the zeal of Huss. In his sermons he now attacked indulgences as well as the abuses of the hierarchy. A second mandate arrived from Rome. The Pope summoned him to answer for his doctrine in person. To obey the summons would have been to walk into his grave. The king, the queen, the university, and many of the magnates of Bohemia sent a joint embassy requesting the Pope to dispense with Huss's appearance in person, and to hear him by his legal counsel. The Pope refused to listen to this supplication. He went on with the case, condemned John Huss in absence, and laid the city of Prague under interdict. ⁵

The Bohemian capital was thrown into perplexity and alarm. On every side tokens met the eye to which the imagination imparted a fearful significance. Prague looked like a city stricken with sudden and terrible calamity. The closed church-doors - the extinguished altar-lights - the corpses waiting burial by the way-side - the images which sanctified and guarded the streets, covered with sackcloth, or laid prostrate on the ground, as if in supplication for a land on which the impieties of its children had brought down a terrible curse - gave emphatic and solemn warning that every hour the citizens harbored within their walls the man who had dared to disobey the Pope's summons, they but increased the heinousness of their guilt, and added to the vengeance of their doom. "Let us cast out the rebel," was the cry of many, "before we perish."

⁴"Exusta igitur sunt (AEnea Sylvio teste) supra ducenta volumina, pulcherrime conscripta, bullis aureis tegumentisque pretiosis ornata." (Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 29. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, p. 118.)

⁵Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 776.

Tumult was beginning to disturb the peace, and slaughter to dye the streets of Prague. What was Huss to do? Should he flee before the storm, and leave a city where he had many friends and not a few disciples? What had his Master said? “The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.” This seemed to forbid his departure. His mind was torn with doubts. But had not the same Master commanded, “When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another”? His presence could but entail calamity upon his friends; so, quitting Prague, he retired to his native village of Hussinetz.

Here Huss enjoyed the protection of the territorial lord, who was his friend. His first thoughts were of those he had left behind in Prague - the flock to whom he had so lovingly ministered in his Chapel of Bethlehem. “I have retired,” he wrote to them, “not to deny the truth, for which I am willing to die, but because impious priests forbid the preaching of it.”⁶ The sincerity of this avowal was attested by the labours he immediately undertook. Making Christ his pattern, he journeyed all through the surrounding region, preaching in the towns and villages. He was followed by great crowds, who hung upon his words, admiring his meekness not less than his courage and eloquence. “The Church,” said his hearers, “has pronounced this man a heretic and a demon, yet his life is holy, and his doctrine is pure and elevating.”⁷

[138] The mind of Huss, at this stage of his career, would seem to
 [139] have been the scene of a painful conflict. Although the Church was seeking to overwhelm him by her thunderbolts, he had not renounced her authority. The Roman Church was still to him the spouse of Christ, and the Pope was the representative and vicar of God. What Huss was warring against was the abuse of authority, not the principle itself. This brought on a terrible conflict between the convictions of his understanding and the claims of his conscience. If the authority was just and infallible, as he believed it to be, how came it that he felt compelled to disobey it? To obey, he saw, was to sin; but why should obedience to an infallible Church lead to such an issue?. This was the problem he could not solve; this was the doubt that tortured him hour by hour. The nearest approximation to a

⁶Letters of Huss, No. 11; Edin., 1846.

⁷Bonnechose, Reformers before the Reformation, vol. 1, p. 87.

solution, which he was able to make, was that it had happened again, as once before in the days of the Savior, that the priests of the Church had become wicked persons, and were using their lawful authority for unlawful ends. This led him to adopt for his own guidance, and to preach to others for theirs, the maxim that the precepts of Scripture, conveyed through the understanding, are to rule the conscience; in other words, that God speaking in the Bible, and not the Church speaking through the priesthood, is the one infallible guide of men. This was to adopt the fundamental principle of Protestantism, and to preach a revolution which Huss himself would have recoiled from, had he been able at that hour to see the length to which it would lead him. The axe which he had grasped was destined to lay low the principle of human supremacy in matters of conscience, but the fetters yet on his arm did not permit him to deliver such blows as would be dealt by the champions who were to follow him, and to whom was reserved the honour of extirpating that bitter root which had yielded its fruits in the corruption of the Church and the slavery of society.

Gradually things quieted in Prague, although it soon became evident that the calm was only on the surface. Intensely had Huss longed to appear again in his Chapel of Bethlehem - the scene of so many triumphs - and his wish was granted. Once more he stands in the old pulpit; once more his loving flock gather round him. With zeal quickened by his banishment, he thunders more courageously than ever against the tyranny of the priesthood in forbidding the free preaching of the Gospel. In proportion as the people grew in knowledge, the more, says Fox, they “complained of the court of Rome and the bishop’s consistory, who plucked from the sheep of Christ the wool and milk, and did not feed them either with the Word of God or good examples.”⁸

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A great revolution was preparing in Bohemia, and it could not be ushered into the world without evoking a tempest. Huss was perhaps the one tranquil man in the nation. A powerful party, consisting of the doctors of the university and the members of the priesthood, was now formed against him. Chief among these were two priests, Paletz and Causis, who had once been his friends, but had now become

⁸Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 776.

his bitterest foes. This party would speedily have silenced him and closed the Chapel of Bethlehem, the center of the movement, had they not feared the people. Every day the popular indignation against the priests waxed stronger. Every day the disciples and defenders of the Reformer waxed bolder, and around him were now powerful as well as numerous friends. The queen was on his side; the lofty character and resplendent virtues of Huss had won her esteem. Many of the nobles declared for him - some of them because they had felt the Divine power of the doctrines which he taught, and others in the hope of sharing in the spoils which they foresaw would by-and-by be gleaned in the wake of the movement. The great body of the citizens were friendly. Captivated by his eloquence, and taught by his pure and elevating doctrine, they had learned to detest the pride, the debaucheries, and the avarice of the priests, and to take part with the man whom so many powerful and unrighteous confederacies were seeking to crush. ⁹

But Huss was alone; he had no fellow-worker; and had doubtless his hours of loneliness and melancholy. One single companion of sympathizing spirit, and of like devotion to the same great cause, would have been to Huss a greater stay and a sweeter solace than all the other friends who stood around him. And it pleased God to give him such: a true yoke-fellow, who brought to the cause he espoused an intellect of great subtlety, and an eloquence of great fervor, combined with a fearless courage, and a lofty devotion. This friend was Jerome of Faulfish, a Bohemian knight, who had returned some time before from Oxford, where he had imbibed the opinions of Wicliffe. As he passed through Paris and Vienna, he challenged the learned men of these universities to dispute with him on matters of faith; but the theses which he maintained with a triumphant logic were held to savor of heresy, and he was thrown into prison. Escaping, however, he came to Bohemia to spread with all the enthusiasm of his character, and all the brilliancy of his eloquence, the doctrines of the English Reformer. ¹⁰

With the name of Huss that of Jerome is henceforward indissolubly associated. Alike in their great qualities and aims, they were

⁹Ibid., vol. 1, p. 780. Bonnechose, vol. 1, p. 97.

¹⁰Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, chap. 7, p. 121. Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 27.

yet in minor points sufficiently diverse for one to be the complement of the other. Huss was the more powerful character, Jerome was the more eloquent orator. Greater in genius, and more popular in gifts, Jerome maintained nevertheless towards Huss the relation of a disciple. It was a beautiful instance of Christian humility. The calm reason of the master was a salutary restraint upon the impetuosity of the disciple. The union of these two men gave a sensible impulse to the cause. While Jerome debated in the schools, and thundered in the popular assemblies, Huss expounded the Scriptures in his chapel, or toiled with his pen at the refutation of some manifesto of the doctors of the university, or some bull of the Vatican. Their affection for each other ripened day by day, and continued unbroken till death came to set its seal upon it, and unite them in the bonds of an eternal friendship.

The drama was no longer confined to the limits of Bohemia. Events were lifting up Huss and Jerome to a stage where they would have to act their part in the presence of all Christendom. Let us cast our eyes around and survey the state of Europe. There were at that time three Popes reigning in Christendom. The Italians had elected Balthazar Cossa, who, as John XXIII., had set up his chair at Bologna. The French had chosen Angelo Corario, who lived at Rimini, under the title of Gregory XII.; and the Spaniards had elected Peter de Lune (Benedict XIII.), who resided in Arragon. Each claimed to be the legitimate successor of Peter, and the true vicegerent of God, and each strove to make good his claim by the bitterness and rage with which he hurled his maledictions against his rival. Christendom was divided, each nation naturally supporting the Pope of its choice. The schism suggested some questions which it was not easy to solve. “If we must obey,” said Huss and his followers, “to whom is our obedience to be paid? Balthazar Cossa, called John XXIII., is at Bologna; Angelo Corario, named Gregory XII., is at Rimini; Peter de Lune, who calls himself Benedict XIII., is in Arragon. If all three are infallible, why does not their testimony agree? and if only one of them is the Most Holy Father, why is it that we cannot distinguish him from the rest?”¹¹ Nor was much help to be got towards a solution by putting the question to the men themselves.

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¹¹Bonnechose, vol. 1, p. 126.

If they asked John XXIII. he told them that Gregory XII. was “a heretic, a demon, the Antichrist;” Gregory XII. obligingly bore the same testimony respecting John XXIII., and both Gregory and John united in sounding, in similar fashion, the praises of Benedict XIII., whom they stigmatized as “an impostor and schismatic;” while Benedict paid back with prodigal interest the compliments of his two opponents. It came to this, that if these men were to be believed, instead of three Popes there were three Antichrists in Christendom; and if they were not to be believed, where was the infallibility, and what had become of the apostolic succession?

The chroniclers of the time labor to describe the distractions, calamities, and woes that grew out of this schism. Europe was plunged into anarchy; every petty State was a theater of war and rapine. The rival Popes sought to crush one another, not with the spiritual bolts only, but with temporal arms also. They went into the market to purchase swords and hire soldiers, and as this could not be done without money, they opened a scandalous traffic in spiritual things to supply themselves with the needful gold. Pardons, dispensations, and places in Paradise they put up to sale, in order to realize the means of equipping their armies for the field. The bishops and inferior clergy, quick to profit by the example set them by the Popes, enriched themselves by simony. At times they made war on their own account, attacking at the head of armed bands the territory of a rival ecclesiastic, or the castle of a temporal baron. A bishop newly elected to Hildesheim, having requested to be shown the library of his predecessors, was led into an arsenal, in which all kinds of arms were piled up. “Those,” said his conductors, “are the books which they made use of to defend the Church; imitate their example.”¹² How different were the words of St. Ambrose! “My arms,” said he, as the Goths approached his city, “are my tears; with other weapons I dare not fight.”

It is distressing to dwell on this deplorable picture. Of the practice of piety nothing remained save a few superstitious rites. Truth, justice, and order banished from among men, force was the arbiter in all things, and nothing was heard but the clash of arms and the sighings of oppressed nations, while above the strife rose the furi-

¹²Bonnechose, vol. 1, p. 99.

ous voices of the rival Popes frantically hurling anathemas at one another. This was truly a melancholy spectacle; but it was necessary, perhaps, that the evil should grow to this head, if peradventure the eyes of men might be opened, and they might see that it was indeed a “bitter thing” that they had forsaken the “easy yoke” of the Gospel, and submitted to a power that set no limits to its usurpations, and which, clothing itself with the prerogatives of God, was waging a war of extermination against all the rights of man.

Chapter 3: Growing Opposition of Huss to Rome

The “Six Errors”—The Pope’s Bull against the King of Hungary—Huss on Indulgences and Crusades—Prophetic Words—Huss closes his Career in Prague

[142] The frightful picture which society now presented had a very powerful effect on John Huss. He studied the Bible, he read the early Fathers, he compared these with the sad spectacles passing before his eyes, and he saw more clearly every day that “the Church” had departed far from her early model, not in practice only, but in doctrine also. A little while ago we saw him leveling his blows at abuses; now we find him beginning to strike at the root on which all these abuses grew, if haply he might extirpate both root and branch together.

It was at this time that he wrote his treatise *On the Church*, a work which enables us to trace the progress of his emancipation from the shackles of authority. He establishes in it the principle that the true Church of Christ has not necessarily an exterior constitution, but that communion with its invisible Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, is alone necessary for it: and that the Catholic Church is the assembly of all the elect.¹

This tractate was followed by another under the title of *The Six Errors*. The first error was that of the priests who boasted of making the body of Jesus Christ in the mass, and of being the creator of their Creator. The second was the confession exacted of the members of the Church - “I believe in the Pope and the saints” - in opposition to which, Huss taught that men are to believe in God only. The third error was the priestly pretension to remit the guilt and punishment of sin. The fourth was the implicit obedience exacted by ecclesiastical superiors to all their commands. The fifth was the making no distinction between a valid excommunication and one that was not so. The sixth error was simony. This Huss designated a

¹“Omnium praedestinatorum universitas.” (De Eccles. - Huss - Hist. et Mon.)

heresy, and scarcely, he believed, could a priest be found who was not guilty of it. ²

This list of errors was placarded on the door of the Bethlehem Chapel. The tract in which they were set forth was circulated far and near, and produced an immense impression throughout the whole of Bohemia.

Another matter which now happened helped to deepen the impression which his tract on The Six Errors had made. John XXIII. fulminated a bull against Ladislaus, King of Hungary, excommunicating him, and all his children to the third generation. The offense which had drawn upon Ladislaus this burst of Pontifical wrath was the support he had given to Gregory XII., one of the rivals of John. The Pope commanded all emperors, kings, princes, cardinals, and men of whatever degree, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, to take up arms against Ladislaus, and utterly to exterminate him and his supporters; and he promised to all who should join the crusade, or who should preach it, or collect funds for its support, the pardon of all their sins, and immediate admission into Paradise should they die in the war - in short, the same indulgences which were accorded to those who bore arms for the conquest of the Holy Land. This fulmination wrapped Bohemia in flames; and Huss seized the opportunity of directing the eyes of his countrymen to the contrast, so perfect and striking, between the vicar of Christ and Christ Himself; between the destroyer and the Savior; between the commands of the bull, which proclaimed war, and the precepts of the Gospel, which preached peace.

A few extracts from his refutation of the Papal bull will enable us to measure the progress Huss was making in evangelical sentiments, and the light which through his means was breaking upon Bohemia. "If the disciples of Jesus Christ," said he, "were not allowed to defend Him who is Chief of the Church, against those who wanted to seize on Him, much more will it not be permissible to a bishop to engage in war for a temporal domination and earthly riches." "As the secular body," he continues, "to whom the temporal sword alone is suitable, cannot undertake to handle the spiritual one, in like manner the ecclesiastics ought to be content with the spiritual sword, and

²Lenfant, vol. 1, p. 37.

not make use of the temporal.” This was flatly to contradict a solemn judgment of the Papal chair which asserted the Church’s right to both swords.

Having condemned crusades, the carnage of which was doubly iniquitous when done by priestly hands, Huss next attacks indulgences. They are an affront to the grace of the Gospel. “God alone possesses the power to forgive sins in an absolute manner.” “The absolution of Jesus Christ,” he says, “ought to precede that of the priest; or, in other words, the priest who absolves and condemns ought to be certain that the case in question is one which Jesus Christ Himself has already absolved or condemned.” This implies that the power of the keys is limited and conditional, in other words that the priest does not pardon, but only declares the pardon of God to the penitent. “If,” he says again, “the Pope uses his power according to God’s commands, he cannot be resisted without resisting God Himself; but if he abuses his power by enjoining what is contrary to the Divine law, then it is a duty to resist him as should be done to the pale horse of the Apocalypse, to the dragon, to the beast, and to the Leviathan.”³

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Waxing bolder as his views enlarged, he proceeded to stigmatize many of the ceremonies of the Roman Church as lacking foundation, and as being foolish and superstitious. He denied the merit of abstinences; he ridiculed the credulity of believing legends, and the groveling superstition of venerating relics, bowing before images, and worshipping the dead. “They are profuse,” said he, referring to the latter class of devotees, “towards the saints in glory, who want nothing; they array bones of the latter with silk and gold and silver, and lodge them magnificently; but they refuse clothing and hospitality to the poor members of Jesus Christ who are amongst us, at whose expense they feed to repletion, and drink till they are intoxicated.” Friars he no more loved than Wicliffe did, if we may judge from a treatise which he wrote at this time, entitled *The Abomination of Monks*, and which he followed by another, wherein he was scarcely more complimentary to the Pope and his court, styling them the members of Antichrist.

³Huss - *Hist. et Mon.*, tom. 1, pp. 215 - 234.

Plainer and bolder every day became the speech of Huss; fiercer grew his invectives and denunciations. The scandals which multiplied around him had, doubtless, roused his indignation, and the persecutions which he endured may have heated his temper. He saw John XXIII., than whom a more infamous man never wore the tiara, professing to open and shut the gates of Paradise, and scattering simoniacal pardons over Europe that he might kindle the flames of war, and extinguish a rival in torrents of Christian blood. It was not easy to witness all this and be calm. In fact, the Pope's bull of crusade had divided Bohemia, and brought matters in that country to extremity. The king and the priesthood were opposed to Ladislaus of Hungary, and consequently supported John XXIII., defending as best they could his indulgences and simonies. On the other hand, many of the magnates of Bohemia, and the great body of the people, sided with Ladislaus, condemned the crusade which the Pope was preaching against him, together with all the infamous means by which he was furthering it, and held the clergy guilty of the blood which seemed about to flow in torrents. The people kept no measure in their talk about the priests. The latter trembled for their lives. The archbishop interfered, but not to throw oil on the waters. He placed Prague under interdict, and threatened to continue the sentence so long as John Huss should remain in the city. The archbishop persuaded himself that if Huss should retire the movement would go down, and the war of factions subside into peace. He but deceived himself. It was not now in the power of any man, even of Huss, to control or to stop that movement. Two ages were struggling together, the old and the new. The Reformer, however, fearing that his presence in Prague might embarrass his friends, again withdrew to his native village of Hussinetz.

During his exile he wrote several letters to his friends in Prague. The letters discover a mind full of that calm courage which springs from trust in God; and in them occur for the first time those prophetic words which Huss repeated afterwards at more than one important epoch in his career, the prediction taking each time a more exact and definite form. "If the goose" (his name in the Bohemian language signifies goose), "which is but a timid bird, and cannot fly very high, has been able to burst its bonds, there will come afterwards an eagle, which will soar high into the air and draw to it all the other birds."

So he wrote, adding, "It is in the nature of truth, that the more we obscure it the brighter will it become."⁴

Huss had closed one career, and was bidden rest awhile before opening his second and sublimer one. Sweet it was to leave the strife and clamor of Prague for the quiet of his birth-place. Here he could calm his mind in the perusal of the inspired page, and fortify his soul by communion with God. For himself he had no fears; he dwelt beneath the shadow of the Almighty.

By the teaching of the Word and the Spirit he had been wonderfully emancipated from the darkness of error. His native country of Bohemia had, too, by his instrumentality been rescued partially from the same darkness. Its reformation could not be completed, nor indeed carried much farther, till the rest of Christendom had come to be more nearly on a level with it in point of spiritual enlightenment. So now the Reformer is withdrawn. Never again was his voice to be heard in his favorite Chapel of Bethlehem. Never more were his living words to stir the hearts of his countrymen. There remains but one act more for Huss to do - the greatest and most enduring of all. As the preacher of Bethlehem Chapel he had largely contributed to emancipate Bohemia, as the martyr of Constance he was largely to contribute to emancipate Christendom.

⁴Letter's of Huss, No. 6; Edin. ed.

Chapter 4: Preparations for the Council of Constance

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Picture of Europe—The Emperor Sigismund—Pope John XXIII—Shall a Council be Convoked?—Assembling of the Council at Constance—Entry of the Pope—Coming of John Huss—Arrival of the Emperor

Picture: View of Constance

Picture: View in the Tyrol - Innsbruck

We have now before us a wider theater than Bohemia. It is the year 1413. Sigismund - a name destined to go down to posterity along with that of Huss, though not with like fame - had a little before mounted the throne of the Empire. Wherever he cast his eyes the new emperor saw only spectacles that distressed him. Christendom was afflicted with a grievous schism. There were three Popes, whose personal profligacies and official crimes were the scandal of that Christianity of which each claimed to be the chief teacher, and the scourge of that Church of which each claimed to be the supreme pastor. The most sacred things were put up to sale, and were the subject of simoniacal bargaining. The bonds of charity were disrupted, and nation was going to war with nation; everywhere strife raged and blood was flowing. The Poles and the knights of the Teutonic order were waging a war which raged only with the greater fury inasmuch as religion was its pretext. Bohemia seemed on the point of being rent in pieces by intestine commotions; Germany was convulsed; Italy had as many tyrants as princes; France was distracted by its factions, and Spain was embroiled by the machinations of Benedict XIII., whose pretensions that country had espoused. To complete the confusion the Mussulman hordes, encouraged by these dissensions, were gathering on the frontier of Europe and threatening to break in and repress all disorders, in a common subjugation of Christendom to the yoke of the Prophet. ¹ To the evils of schism, of war, and

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¹Lenfant, *Hist. Counc. Const.*, vol. 1, chap. 1.

Turkish invasion, was now added the worse evil - as Sigismund doubtless accounted it - of heresy. A sincere devotee, he was moved even to tears by this spectacle of Christendom disgraced and torn asunder by its Popes, and undermined and corrupted by its heretics. The emperor gave his mind anxiously to the question how these evils were to be cured. The expedient he hit upon was not an original one certainly - it had come to be a stereotyped remedy - but it possessed a certain plausibility that fascinated men, and so Sigismund resolved to make trial of it: it was a General Council.

[146] This plan had been tried at Pisa,² and it had failed. This did not promise much for a second attempt; but the failure had been set down to the fact that then the miter and the Empire were at war with each other, whereas now the Pope and the emperor were prepared to act in concert. In these more advantageous circumstances Sigismund resolved to convene the whole Church, all its patriarchs, cardinals, bishops, and princes, and to summon before this august body the three rival Popes, and the leaders of the new opinions, not doubting that a General Council would have authority enough, more especially when seconded by the imperial power, to compel the Popes to adjust their rival claims, and put the heretics to silence. These were the two objects which the emperor had in eye - to heal the schism and to extirpate heresy.

Sigismund now opened negotiations with John XXIII.³ To the Pope the idea of a Council was beyond measure alarming. Nor can one wonder at this, if his conscience was loaded with but half the crimes of which Popish historians have accused him. But he dared not refuse the emperor. John's crusade against Ladislaus had not prospered. The King of Hungary was in Rome with his army, and the Pope had been compelled to flee to Bologna; and terrible as a Council was to Pope John, he resolved to face it, rather than offend the emperor, whose assistance he needed against the man whose ire he had wantonly provoked by his bull of crusade, and from whose victorious arms he was now fain to seek a deliverer. Pope John was accused of opening his way to the tiara by the murder of his

²Dupin, *Eccles. Hist., Counc. of Pisa., cent. 15, chap 1.*

³Lenfant, *Hist. Counc. Const., vol. 1, chap. 1, p. 6.* Dupin, *Eccles. Hist., cent. 15, chap. 1, p. 9; Lond., 1699.*

predecessor, Alexander V.,⁴ and he lived in continual fear of being hurled from his chair by the same dreadful means by which he had mounted to it. It was finally agreed that a General Council should be convoked for November 1st, 1414, and that it should meet in the city of Constance.⁵

The day came and the Council assembled. From every kingdom and state, and almost from every city in Europe, came delegates to swell that great gathering. All that numbers, and princely rank, and high ecclesiastical dignity, and fame in learning, could do to make an assembly illustrious, contributed to give eclat to the Council of Constance. Thirty cardinals, twenty archbishops, one hundred and fifty bishops, and as many prelates, a multitude of abbots and doctors, and eighteen hundred priests came together in obedience to the joint summons of the emperor and the Pope.

Among the members of sovereign rank were the Electors of Palatine, of Mainz, and of Saxony; the Dukes of Austria, of Bavaria, and of Silesia. There were margraves, counts, and barons without number.⁶ But there were three men who took precedence of all others in that brilliant assemblage, though each on a different ground. These three men were the Emperor Sigismund, Pope John XXIII., and - last and greatest of all - John Huss.

The two anti-Popes had been summoned to the Council. They appeared, not in person, but by delegates, some of whom were of the cardinalate. This raised a weighty question in the Council, whether these cardinal delegates should be received in their red hats. To permit the ambassadors to appear in the insignia of their rank might, it was argued, be construed into a tacit admission by the Council of the claims of their masters, both of whom had been deposed by the Council of Pisa; but, for the sake of peace, it was agreed to receive the deputies in the usual costume of the cardinalate.⁷ In

⁴Alexander V. was a Greek of the island of Candia; he was taken up by an Italian monk, educated at Oxford, made Bishop of Vicenza, and chosen Pope by the Council of Pisa. (Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15.)

⁵Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 7. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, chap. 2, p. 10. Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 781. Mosheim, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, pt. 2, chap. 2, sec. 4.

⁶Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 83. Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 1, p. 155. Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 782.

⁷Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, chap. 2, p. 11.

that assembly were the illustrious scholar, Poggio; the celebrated Thierry de Niem, secretary to several Popes, “and whom,” it has been remarked, “Providence placed near the source of so many iniquities for the purpose of unveiling and stigmatizing them;” - Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, greater as the elegant historian than as the wearer of the triple crown; Manuel Chrysoloras, the restorer to the world of some of the writings of Demosthenes and of Cicero; the almost heretic, John Charlier Gerson; ⁸ the brilliant disputant, Peter D’Ailly, Cardinal of Cambray, surnamed “the Eagle of France,” and a host of others.

[147] In the train of the Council came a vast concourse of pilgrims from all parts of Christendom. Men from beyond the Alps and the Pyrenees mingled here with the natives of the Hungarian and Bohemian plains. Room could not be found in Constance for this great multitude, and booths and wooden erections rose outside the walls. Theatrical representations and religious processions proceeded together. Here was seen a party of revelers and masqueraders busy with their cups and their pastimes, there knots of cowed and hooded devotees devoutly telling their beads. The orison of the monk and the stave of the bacchanal rose blended in one. So great an increase of the population of the little town - amounting, it is supposed, to 100,000 souls - rendered necessary a corresponding enlargement of its commissariat. ⁹ All the highways leading to Constance were crowded with vehicles, conveying thither all kinds of provisions and delicacies: ¹⁰ the wines of France, the breadstuffs of Lombardy, the

⁸There was no more famous Gallican divine than Gerson. His treatise on the Ecclesiastical Power which was read before the Council, and which has been preserved in an abridged form by Lenfant (vol. 2, bk. 5, chap. 10), shows him to have been one of the subtlest intellects of his age. He draws the line between the temporal and the spiritual powers with a nicety which approaches that of modern times, and he drops a hint of a power of direction in the Pope, that may have suggested to Le Maistre his famous theory, which resolved the Pope’s temporal supremacy into a power of direction, and which continued to be the common opinion till superseded by the dogma of infallibility in 1870.

⁹The Pope alone had 600 persons in his retinue; the cardinals had fully 1,200; the bishops, archbishops, and abbots, between 4,000 and 5,000. There were 1,200 scribes, besides their servants, etc. John Huss alone had eight, without reckoning his vicar who also accompanied him. The retinue of the princes, barons, and ambassadors was numerous in proportion. (Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, pp. 83, 84.)

¹⁰Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 1, p. 158. See also note by translator.

honey and butter of Switzerland; the venison of the Alps and the fish of their lakes, the cheese of Holland, and the confections of Paris and London.

The emperor and the Pope, in the matter of the Council, thought only of circumventing one another. Sigismund professed to regard John XXIII. as the valid possessor of the tiara; nevertheless he had formed the secret purpose of compelling him to renounce it. And the Pope on his part pretended to be quite cordial in the calling of the Council, but his firm intention was to dissolve it as soon as it had assembled if, after feeling its pulse, he should find it to be unfriendly to himself. He set out from Bologna, on the 1st of October, with store of jewels and money. Some he would corrupt by presents, others he hoped to dazzle by the splendor of his court.¹¹ All agree in saying that he took this journey very much against the grain, and that his heart misgave him a thousand times on the road. He took care, however, as he went onward to leave the way open behind for his safe retreat. As he passed through the Tyrol he made a secret treaty with Frederick, Duke of Austria, to the effect that one of his strong castles should be at his disposal if he found it necessary to leave Constance. He made friends, likewise, with John, Count of Nassau, Elector of Mainz. When he had arrived within a league of Constance he prudently conciliated the Abbot of St. Ulric, by bestowing the miter upon him. This was a special prerogative of the Popes of which the bishops thought they had cause to complain. Not a stage did John advance without taking precautions for his safety - all the more that several incidents befell him by the way which his fears interpreted into auguries of evil. When he had passed through the town of Trent his jester said to him, "The Pope who passes through Trent is undone."¹² In descending the mountains of the Tyrol, at that point of the road where the city of Constance, with the lake and plain, comes into view, his carriage was overturned. The Pontiff was thrown out and rolled on the highway; he was not hurt the least, but the fall brought the color into his face. His attendants crowded round him, anxiously inquiring if he had come by harm: "By the devil," said he, "I am down; I had better have stayed at

¹¹Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 17.

¹²"Pater sante qui passo Trenta perdo." (Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 18.)

Bologna;” and casting a suspicious glance at the city beneath him, “I see how it is,” he said, “that is the pit where the foxes are snared.”

¹³

John XXIII. entered Constance on horseback, the 28th of October, attended by nine cardinals, several archbishops, bishops, and other prelates, and a numerous retinue of courtiers. He was received at the gates with all possible magnificence. “The body of the clergy,” says Lenfant, “went to meet him in solemn procession, bearing the relics of saints. All the orders of the city assembled also to do him honour, and he was conducted to the episcopal palace by an incredible multitude of people. Four of the chief magistrates rode by his side, supporting a canopy of cloth of gold, and the Count Radolph de Montfort and the Count Berthold des Ursins held the bridle of his horse. The Sacrament was carried before him upon a white pad, with a little bell about its neck; after the Sacrament a great yellow and red hat was carried, with an angel of gold at the button of the ribbon. All the cardinals followed in cloaks and red hats. Reichenthal, who has described this ceremony, says there was a great dispute among the Pope’s officers as to who should have his horse, but Henry of Ulm put an end to it by saying that the horse belonged to him, as he was burgomaster of the town, and so he caused him to be put into his stables. The city made the presents to the Pope that are usual on these occasions; it gave a silver-gilt cup weighing five marks, four small casks of Italian wine, four great vessels of wine of Alsace, eight great vessels of the country wine, and forty measures of oats, all which presents were given with great ceremony. Henry of Ulm carried the cup on horseback, accompanied by six councilors, who were also on horseback. When the Pope saw them before his palace, he sent an auditor to know what was coming. Being informed that it was presents from the city to the Pope, the auditor introduced them, and presented the cup to the Pope in the name of the city. The Pope, on his part, ordered a robe of black silk to be presented to the consul.” ¹⁴

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While the Pope was approaching Constance on the one side, John Huss was traveling towards it on the other. He did not conceal from

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, chap. 1, p. 19.

himself the danger he ran in appearing before such a tribunal. His judges were parties in the cause. What hope could Huss entertain that they would try him dispassionately by the Scriptures to which he had appealed? Where would they be if they allowed such an authority to speak? But he must appear; Sigismund had written to King Wenceslaus to send him thither; and, conscious of his innocence and the justice of his cause, thither he went.

In prospect of the dangers before him, he obtained, before setting out, a safe-conduct from his own sovereign; also a certificate of his orthodoxy from Nicholas, Bishop of Nazareth, Inquisitor of the Faith in Bohemia; and a document drawn up by a notary, and duly signed by witnesses, setting forth that he had offered to purge himself of heresy before a provincial Synod of Prague, but had been refused audience. He afterwards caused writings to be affixed to the doors of all the churches and all the palaces of Prague, notifying his departure, and inviting all persons to come to Constance who were prepared to testify either to his innocence or his guilt. To the door of the royal palace even did he affix such notification, addressed “to the King, to the Queen, and to the whole Court.” He made papers of this sort be put up at every place on his road to Constance. In the imperial city of Nuremberg he gave public notice that he was going to the Council to give an account of his faith, and invited all who had anything to lay to his charge to meet him there. He started, not from Prague, but from Carlowitz. Before setting out he took farewell of his friends as of those he never again should see. He expected to find more enemies at the Council than Jesus Christ had at Jerusalem; but he was resolved to endure the last degree of punishment rather than betray the Gospel by any cowardice. The presentiments with which he began his journey attended him all the way. He felt it to be a pilgrimage to the stake.¹⁵

At every village and town on his route he was met with fresh tokens of the power that attached to his name, and the interest his cause had awakened. The inhabitants turned out to welcome him. Several of the country curés were especially friendly; it was their battle which he was fighting as well as his own, and heartily did they wish him success. At Nuremberg, and other towns through

¹⁵Ibid. vol. 1, pp. 38 - 41.

which he passed, the magistrates formed a guard of honour, and escorted him through streets thronged with spectators eager to catch a glimpse of the man who had begun a movement which was stirring Christendom. ¹⁶ His journey was a triumphal procession in a sort. He was enlisting, at every step, new adherents, and gaining accessions of moral force to his cause. He arrived in Constance on the 3rd of November, and took up his abode at the house of a poor widow, whom he likened to her of Sarepta. ¹⁷

The emperor did not reach Constance until Christmas Eve. His arrival added a new attraction to the melodramatic performance proceeding at the little town. The Pope signalled the event by singing a Pontifical mass, the emperor assisting, attired in dalmatic in his character as deacon, and reading the Gospel - "There came an edict from Caesar Augustus that all the world," etc. The ceremony was ended by John XXIII. presenting a sword to Sigismund, with an exhortation to the man into whose hand he put it to make vigorous use of it against the enemies of the Church. The Pope, doubtless, had John Huss mainly in his eye. Little did he dream that it was upon himself that its first stroke was destined to descend. ¹⁸

[149] The Emperor Sigismund, whose presence gave a new splendor to the fetes and a new dignity to the Council, was forty-seven years of age. He was noble in person, tall in stature, graceful in manners, and insinuating in address. He had a long beard, and flaxen hair, which fell in a profusion of curls upon his shoulders. His narrow understanding had been improved by study, and he was accomplished beyond his age. He spoke with facility several languages, and was a patron of men of letters. Having one day conferred nobility upon a scholar, who was desirous of being ranked among nobles rather than among doctors, Sigismund laughed at him, and said that "he could make a thousand gentlemen in a day, but that he could not make a scholar in a thousand years." ¹⁹ The reverses of his maturer years had

¹⁶Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 789. Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 1, pp. 150 - 152.

¹⁷Palacky informs us that the house in which Huss lodged is still standing at Constance, with a bust of the Reformer in its front wall.

¹⁸Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 77.

¹⁹Maimbourg, *Hist. of Western Schism.*, tom. 2, pp. 123, 124; Dutch ed. Theobald, *Bell. Huss*, p. 38. Aeneas Sylvius, *Hist. Bohem.*, p. 45. Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, pp. 78, 79.

sobered the impetuous and fiery spirit of his youth. He committed the error common to almost all the princes of his age, in believing that in order to reign it was necessary to dissemble, and that craft was an indispensable part of policy. He was a sincere devotee; but just in proportion as he believed in the Church, was he scandalized and grieved at the vices of the clergy. It cost him infinite pains to get this Council convoked, but all had been willingly undertaken in the hope that assembled Christendom would be able to heal the schism, and put an end to the scandals growing out of it.

The name of Sigismund has come down to posterity with an eternal blot upon it. How such darkness came to encompass a name which, but for one fatal act, might have been fair, if not illustrious, we shall presently show. Meanwhile let us rapidly sketch the opening proceedings of the Council, which were but preparatory to the great tragedy in which it was destined to culminate.

Chapter 5: Deposition of the Rival Popes

Canonization of St. Bridget—A Council Superior to the
Pope—Wicliffe’s Writings Condemned—Trial of Pope
John—Indictment against him—He Escapes from Constance—His
Deposition—Deposition of the Two Anti-Popes—Vindication of
Huss beforehand

Picture: Entry of Pope John into Constance

Picture: Reception of John Huss at Nuremberg

The first act of the Council, after settling how the votes were to be taken - namely, by nations and not by persons - was to enroll the name of St. Bridget among the saints. This good lady, whose piety had been abundantly proved by her pilgrimages and the many miracles ascribed to her, was of the blood-royal of Sweden, and the foundress of the order of St. Savior, so called because Christ himself, she affirmed, had dictated the rules to her. She was canonized first of all by Boniface IX. (1391); but this was during the schism, and the validity of the act might be held doubtful. To place St. Bridget’s title beyond question, she was, at the request of the Swedes, canonized a second time by John XXIII. But unhappily, John himself being afterwards deposed, Bridget’s saintship became again dubious; and so she was canonized a third time by Martin V. (1419), to prevent her being overtaken by a similar calamity with that of her patron, and expelled from the ranks of the heavenly deities as John was from the list of the Pontifical ones. ¹

While the Pope was assigning to others their place in heaven, his own place on earth had become suddenly insecure. Proceedings were commenced in the Council which were meant to pave the way for John’s dethronement. In the fourth and fifth sessions it was solemnly decreed that a General Council is superior to the Pope. “A Synod congregate in the Holy Ghost,” so ran the decree, “making a General Council, representing the whole Catholic Church here

¹Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, pp. 106, 107.

militant, hath power of Christ immediately, to the which power every person, of what state or dignity soever he be, yea, being the Pope himself, ought to be obedient in all such things as concern the general reformation of the Church, as well in the Head as in the members.”² The Council in this decree asserted its absolute and supreme authority, and affirmed the subjection of the Pope in matters of faith as well as manners to its judgment.³

In the eighth session (May 4th, 1415), John Wicliffe was summoned from his rest, cited before the Council, and made answerable to it for his mortal writings. Forty-five propositions, previously culled from his publications, were condemned, and this sentence was fittingly followed by a decree consigning their author to the flames. Wicliffe himself being beyond their reach, his bones, pursuant to this sentence, were afterwards dug up and burned.⁴ The next labor of the Council was to take the cup from the laity, and to decree that Communion should be only in one kind. This prohibition was issued under the penalty of excommunication.⁵

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These matters dispatched, or rather while they were in course of being so, the Council entered upon the weightier affair of Pope John XXIII. Universally odious, the Pope's deposition had been resolved on beforehand by the emperor and the great majority of the members. At a secret sitting a terrible indictment was tabled against him. “It contained,” says his secretary, Thierry de Niem, “all the mortal sins, and a multitude of others not fit to be named.” “More than forty-three most grievous and heinous crimes,” says Fox, “were objected and proved against him: as that he had hired Marcillus Permensis, a physician, to poison Alexander V., his predecessor. Further, that he was a heretic, a simoniac, a liar, a hypocrite, a murderer, an enchanter, a dice-player, and an adulterer; and finally,

²Concilium Constant., Sess. 5. - Hardouin, tom. 8, col. 258; Parisiis.

³Natalis Alexander, Eccles. Hist., sec. 15, dis. 4. Dupin, Eccles. Hist., cent. 15, chap. 2, pp. 14, 15. Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 782. Mosheim, Eccles. Hist., cent. 15, pt. 2, chap. 2, sec. 4.

⁴See decree of Pope John against Wicliffe, ordering the exhumation and burning of his bones, in Hardouin, Acta Concil., tom. 8, pp. 263 - 303; Parisiis. Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 782. Mosheim, Eccles. 1013 Hist., cent. 15, pt. 2, chap. 2, sec. 8. Dupin Eccles. Hist., cent. 15, chap. 7, pp. 121, 122..

⁵Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 783. Mosheim, Eccles. Hist., cent. 15, pt. 2, chap. 2.

what crime was it that he was not infected with?"⁶ When the Pontiff heard of these accusations he was overwhelmed with affright, and talked of resigning; but recovering from his panic, he again grasped firmly the tiara which he had been on the point of letting go, and began a struggle for it with the emperor and the Council. Making himself acquainted with everything by his spies, he held midnight meetings with his friends, bribed the cardinals, and labored to sow division among the nations composing the Council. But all was in vain. His opponents held firmly to their purpose. The indictment [152] against John they dared not make public, lest the Pontificate should be everlastingly disgraced, and occasion given for a triumph to the party of Wicliffe and Huss; but the conscience of the miserable man seconded the efforts of his prosecutors. The Pope promised to abdicate; but repenting immediately of his promise, he quitted the city by stealth and fled to Schaffhausen.⁷

We have seen the pomp with which John XXIII. entered Constance. In striking contrast to the ostentatious display of his arrival, was the mean disguise in which he sought to conceal his departure. The plan of his escape had been arranged beforehand between himself and his good friend and staunch protector, the Duke of Austria. The duke, on a certain day, was to give a tournament. The spectacle was to come off late in the afternoon; and while the whole city should be engrossed with the fete, the lords tilting in the arena and the citizens gazing at the mimic war, and oblivious of all else, the Pope would take leave of Constance and of the Council.⁸

It was the 20th of March, the eve of St. Benedict, the day fixed upon for the duke's entertainment, and now the tournament was proceeding. The city was empty, for the inhabitants had poured out to see the tilting and reward the victors with their acclamations. The dusk of evening was already beginning to veil the lake, the plain, and the mountains of the Tyrol in the distance, when John XXIII., disguising himself as a groom or postillion, and mounted on a sorry nag, rode through the crowd and passed on to the south. A coarse

⁶Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 782. See tenor of citation of Pope John - Hardouin, *Acta Concil.*, tom. 8, p. 291; Parisiis.

⁷Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, chap. 2. Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 1, pp. 180 - 182.

⁸Von der Hardt, tom. 1, p. 77. Niem, apud Von der Hardt, tom. 2, pp. 313

grey loose coat was flung over his shoulders, and at his saddlebow hung a crossbow; no one suspected that this homely figure, so poorly mounted, was other than some peasant of the mountains, who had been to market with his produce, and was now on his way back. The duke of Austria was at the moment fighting in the lists, when a domestic approached him, and whispered into his ear what had occurred. The duke went on with the tournament as if nothing had happened, and the fugitive held on his way till he had reached Schaffhausen, where, as the town belonged to the duke, the Pope deemed himself in safety. Thither he was soon followed by the duke himself.⁹

When the Pope's flight became known, all was in commotion at Constance. The Council was at an end, so every one thought; the flight of the Pope would be followed by the departure of the princes and the emperor: the merchants shut their shops and packed up their wares, only too happy if they could escape pillage from the lawless mob into whose hands, as they believed, the town had now been thrown. After the first moments of consternation, however, the excitement calmed down. The emperor mounted his horse and rode round the city, declaring openly that he would protect the Council, and maintain order and quiet; and thus things in Constance returned to their usual channel.

Still the Pope's flight was an untoward event. It threatened to disconcert all the plans of the emperor for healing the schism and restoring peace to Christendom. Sigismund saw the labours of years on the point of being swept away. He hastily assembled the princes and deputies, and with no little indignation declared it to be his purpose to reduce the Duke of Austria by force of arms, and bring back the fugitive. When the Pope learned that a storm was gathering, and would follow him across the Tyrol, he wrote in conciliatory terms to the emperor, excusing his flight by saying that he had gone to Schaffhausen to enjoy its sweeter air, that of Constance not agreeing with him; moreover, in this quiet retreat, and at liberty, he would be able to show the world how freely he acted in fulfilling his promise of renouncing the Pontificate.

⁹Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 130.

John, however, was in no haste, even in the pure air and full freedom of Schaffhausen, to lay down the tiara. He procrastinated and maneuvered; he went farther away every few days, in quest, as suggested, of still sweeter air, though his enemies hinted that the Pope's ailment was not a vitiated atmosphere, but a bad conscience. His thought was that his flight would be the signal for the Council to break up, and that he would thus checkmate Sigismund, and avoid the humiliation of deposition. ¹⁰ But the emperor was not to be balked. He put his troops in motion against the Duke of Austria; and the Council, seconding Sigismund with its spiritual weapons, wrested the infallibility from the Pope, and took that formidable engine into its own hands. "This decision of the Council," said the celebrated Gallican divine, Gerson, in a sermon which he preached before the assembly, "ought to be engraved in the most eminent places and in all the churches of the world, as a fundamental law to crush the monster of ambition, and to stop the mouths of all flatterers who, by virtue of certain glosses, say, bluntly and without any regard to the eternal law of the Gospel, that the Pope is not subject to a General Council, and cannot be judged by such." ¹¹

The way being thus prepared, the Council now proceeded to the trial of the Pope. Public criers at the door of the church summoned John XXIII. to appear and answer to the charges to be brought against him. The criers expended their breath in vain; John was on the other side of the Tyrol; and even had he been within ear-shot, he was not disposed to obey their citation. Three-and-twenty commissioners were then nominated for the examination of the witnesses. The indictment contained seventy accusations, but only fifty were read in public Council; the rest were withheld from a regard to the honour of the Pontificate - a superfluous care, one would think, after what had already been permitted to see the light. Thirty-seven witnesses were examined, and one of the points to which they bore testimony, but which the Council left under a veil, was the poisoning by John of his predecessor, Alexander V. The charges were held to be proven, and in the twelfth session (May 29th, 1415) the Council passed sentence, stripping John XXIII. of the

¹⁰Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, chap. 2, pp. 12, 13. Bonnechose,

¹¹Lenfant, *Hist. Conc. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 463.

Pontificate, and releasing all Christians from their oath of obedience to him. ¹²

When the blow fell, Pope John was as abject as he had before been arrogant. He acknowledged the justice of his sentence, bewailed the day he had mounted to the Popedom, and wrote cringingly to the emperor, if haply his miserable life might be spared ¹³ - which no one, by the way, thought of taking from him.

The case of the other two Popes was simpler, and more easily disposed of. They had already been condemned by the Council of Pisa, which had put forth an earlier assertion than the Council of Constance of the supremacy of a Council, and its right to deal with heretical and simoniacal Popes. Angelus Corario, Gregory XII., voluntarily sent in his resignation; and Peter de Lune, Benedict XIII., was deposed; and Otta de Colonna, being unanimously elected by the cardinals, ruled the Church under the title of Martin V.

Before turning to the more tragic page of the history of the Council, we have to remark that it seems almost as if the Fathers at Constance were intent on erecting beforehand a monument to the innocence of John Huss, and to their own guilt in the terrible fate to which they were about to consign him. The crimes for which they condemned Balthazar Cossa, John XXIII., were the same, only more atrocious and fouler, as those of which Huss accused the priesthood, and for which he demanded a reformation. The condemnation of Pope John was, therefore, whether the Council confessed it or not, the vindication of Huss. "When all the members of the Council shall be scattered in the world like storks," said Huss, in a letter which he wrote to a friend at this time, "they will know when winter cometh what they did in summer. Consider, I pray you, that they have judged their head, the Pope, worthy of death by reason of his horrible crimes. Answer to this, you teachers who preach that the Pope is a god upon earth; that he may sell and waste in what manner he pleaseth the holy things, as the lawyers say; that he is the head of the entire holy Church, and governeth it well; that he is the heart of

¹²Concil., Const., Sess. 12: - Hardouin, tom. 8, col. 376, 377; Parisiis. Dupin, Eccles. Hist., cent. 15, chap. 2, p. 17. Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 782. Mosheim, Eccles. Hist., cent. 15, pt. 2, chap. 2, sec. 4. The crimes proven against Pope John in the Council of Constance may be

¹³Hardouin, Acta Concil., tom. 8, pp. 361, 362.

the Church, and quickeneth it spiritually; that he is the well-spring from whence floweth all virtue and goodness; that he is the sun of the Church, and a very safe refuge to which every Christian ought to fly. Yet, behold now that head, as it were, severed by the sword; this terrestrial god enchained; his sins laid bare; this never-failing source dried up; this divine sun dimmed; this heart plucked out, and branded with reprobation, that no one should seek an asylum in it.”

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¹⁴Lenfant, *Hist. Counc. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 398; and Huss's Letters, No. 47; Edin. ed. Some one posted up in the hall of the Council, one day, the following intimation, as from the Holy Ghost: "Aliis rebus occupati nunc non adesse vobis non possumus;" that is, "Being otherwise occupied at this time, we are not able to be present with you." (Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 782.)

Chapter 6: Imprisonment and Examination of Huss [154]

The Emperor's Safe-conduct—Imprisonment of Huss—Flame in Bohemia—No Faith to be kept with Heretics—The Pope and Huss in the same Prison—Huss brought before the Council—His Second Appearance—An Eclipse—Huss's Theological Views—A Protestant at Heart—He Refuses to Retract—His Dream

Picture: Nuremberg

Picture: Bishop of Lodi Preaching at the Trial of Huss

When John Huss set out for the Council, he carried with him, as we have already said, several important documents. ¹ But the most important of all Huss's credentials was a safe-conduct from the Emperor Sigismund. Without this, he would hardly have undertaken the journey. We quote it in full, seeing it has become one of the great documents of history. It was addressed "to all ecclesiastical and secular princes, etc., and to all our subjects." "We recommend to you with a full affection, to all in general and to each in particular, the honorable Master John Huss, Bachelor in Divinity, and Master of Arts, the bearer of these presents, journeying from Bohemia to the Council of Constance, whom we have taken under our protection and safeguard, and under that of the Empire, enjoining you to receive him and treat him kindly, furnishing him with all that shall be necessary to speed and assure his journey, as well by water as by land, without taking anything from him or his at coming in or going out, for any sort of duties whatsoever; and calling on you to allow him to pass, sojourn, stop, and return freely and securely, providing him even, if necessary, with good passports, for the honour and respect of the Imperial Majesty. Given at Spiers this 18th day of October of the year 1414, the third of our reign in Hungary, and the fifth of that of the Romans." ² In the above document, the emperor pledges his

¹These documents are given in full in Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, pp. 786 - 788.

²This document is given by all contemporary historians, by Von der Hardt, tom. 4, p. 12; by Lenfant, *Hist. Counc. Const.*, vol. 1, pp. 61, 62; by Fra Paolo; by Sleidan in

honour and the power of the Empire for the safety of Huss. He was to go and return, and no man dare molest him. No promise could be more sacred, no protection apparently more complete. How that pledge was redeemed we shall see by-and-by.

Huss's trust, however, was in One more powerful than the kings of earth. "I confide altogether," wrote he to one of his friends, "in the all-powerful God, in my Savior; he will accord me his Holy Spirit to fortify me in his truth, so that I may face with courage temptations, prison, and if necessary a cruel death."³

Full liberty was accorded him during the first days of his stay at Constance. He made his arrival be intimated to the Pope the day after by two Bohemian noblemen who accompanied him, adding that he carried a safe-conduct from the emperor. The Pope received them courteously, and expressed his determination to protect Huss.⁴ The Pope's own position was too precarious, however, to make his promise of any great value. Paletz and Causis, who, of all the ecclesiastics of Prague, were the bitterest enemies of Huss, had preceded him to Constance, and were working day and night among the members of the Council to inflame them against him, and secure his condemnation. Their machinations were not without result. On the twenty-sixth day after his arrival Huss was arrested, in flagrant violation of the imperial safe-conduct, and carried before the Pope and the cardinals.⁵ After a conversation of some hours, he was told that he must remain a prisoner, and was entrusted to the clerk of the Cathedral of Constance. He remained a week at the house of this official under a strong guard. Thence he was conducted to the prison of the monastery of the Dominicans on the banks of the Rhine. The sewage of the monastery flowed close to the place where he was confined, and the damp and pestilential air of his prison brought on a

his Commentaries; and, in short, by all who have written the history of the Council The terms are very precise: to pass freely and to returns. The Jesuit Maimbourg, when writing the history of the period, was compelled to own the imperial safe-conduct. In truth, it was admitted by the Council when, in its nineteenth session, it defended the emperor against those "evilspeakers" who blamed him for violating, it. The obvious and better defense would have been that the safe-conduct never existed, could the Council in consistency with fact have so affirmed.

³Hist. et Mon. J. Huss., epist, 1.

⁴Lenfant, Hist. Counc. Const., vol. 1, p. 43.

⁵Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 790. Dupin, Eccles. Hist. cent. 15, chap. 7, p. 121.

raging fever, which had well-nigh terminated his life. ⁶ His enemies feared that after all he would escape them, and the Pope sent his own physicians to him to take care of his health. ⁷

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When the tidings of his imprisonment reached Huss's native country, they kindled a flame in Bohemia. Burning words bespoke the indignation that the nation felt at the treachery and cruelty with which their great countryman had been treated. The puissant barons united in a remonstrance to the Emperor Sigismund, reminding him of his safe-conduct, and demanding that he should vindicate his own honour, and redress the injustice done to Huss, by ordering his instant liberation. The first impulse of Sigismund was to open Huss's prison, but the casuists of the Council found means to keep it shut. The emperor was told that he had no right to grant a safe-conduct in the circumstances without the consent of the Council; that the greater good of the Church must over-rule his promise; that the Council by its supreme authority could release him from his obligation, and that no formality of this sort could be suffered to obstruct the course of justice against a heretic. ⁸ The promptings of honour and humanity were stifled in the emperor's breast by these reasonings. In the voice of the assembled Church he heard the voice of God, and delivered up John Huss to the will of his enemies.

The Council afterwards put its reasonings into a decree, to the effect that no faith is to be kept with heretics to the prejudice of the Church. ⁹

Being now completely in their power, the enemies of Huss pushed on the process against him. They examined his writings, they

⁶Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, chap. 7, p. 121. Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 1, pp. 170 - 173.

⁷Lenfant, *Hist. Conc. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 61.

⁸Von der Hardt, tom. 4, p. 397.

⁹The precise words of this decree are as follow: - "Nec aliqua sibi fides aut promissio de jure naturali divino et humano fuerit in prejudicium Catholicae fidel observanda." (*Concil. Const.*, Sess. 19: - Hardouin, *Acta Concil.*, tom. 8, col. 454; Parisiis.) The meaning is, that by no law natural or divine is faith to be kept with heretics to the prejudice of the Catholic faith. This doctrine was promulgated by the third Lateran Council (Alexander III., 1167), decreed by the Council of Constance, and virtually confirmed by the Council of Trent. The words of the third Lateran Council are - "oaths made against the interest and benefit of the Church are not so much to be considered as oaths, but as perjuries" (*non quasi juramenta sed quasi perjuria*).

founded a series of criminatory articles upon them, and proceeding to his prison, where they found him still suffering severely from fever, they read them to him. He craved of them the favor of an advocate to assist him in framing his defense, enfeebled as he was in body and mind by the foul air of his prison, and the fever with which he had been smitten. This request was refused, although the indulgence asked was one commonly accorded to even the greatest criminals. At this stage the proceedings against him were stopped for a little while by an unexpected event, which turned the thoughts of the Council in another direction. It was now that Pope John escaped, as we have already related. In the interval, the keepers of his monastic prison having fled along with their master, the Pope, Huss was removed to the Castle of Gottlieben, on the other side of the Rhine, where he was shut up, heavily loaded with chains. ¹⁰

While the proceedings against Huss stood still, those against the Pope went forward. The flight of John had brought his affairs to a crisis, and the Council, without more delay, deposed him from the Pontificate, as narrated above.

To the delegates whom the Council sent to intimate to him his sentence, he delivered up the Pontifical seal and the fisherman's ring. Along with these insignia they took possession of his person, brought him back to Constance, and threw him into the prison of Gottlieben, ¹¹ the same stronghold in which Huss was confined. How solemn and instructive! The Reformer and the man who had arrested him are now the inmates of the same prison, yet what a gulf divides the Pontiff from the martyr! The chains of the one are the monuments of his infamy. The bonds of the other are the badges of his virtue. They invest their wearer with a luster which is lacking to the diadem of Sigismund.

The Council was only the more intent on condemning Huss, that it had already condemned Pope John. It instinctively felt that the deposition of the Pontiff was a virtual justification of the Reformer, and that the world would so construe it. It was minded to avenge itself on the man who had compelled it to lay open its sores to the world. It felt, moreover, no little pleasure in the exercise of its newly-

¹⁰Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, chap. 7, p. 121. Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 793. Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 1, pp. 191, 192.

¹¹Bonnechose, vol. 1, pp. 243 - 248.

acquired prerogative of infallibility: a Pope had fallen beneath its stroke, why should a simple priest defy its authority?

The Council, however, delayed bringing John Huss to his trial. His two great opponents, Paletz and Causis - whose enmity was whetted, doubtless, by the discomfitures they had sustained from Huss in Prague - feared the effect of his eloquence upon the members, and took care that he should not appear till they had prepared the Council for his condemnation. At last, on the 5th of June, 1415, he was put on his trial. ¹² His books were produced, and he was asked if he acknowledged being the writer of them. This he readily did. The articles of crimination were next read. Some of these were fair statements of Huss's opinions; others were exaggerations or perversions, and others again were wholly false, imputing to him opinions which he did not hold, and which he had never taught. Huss naturally wished to reply, pointing out what was false, what was perverted, and what was true in the indictment preferred against him, assigning the grounds and adducing the proofs in support of those sentiments which he really held, and which he had taught. He had not uttered more than a few words when there arose in the hall a clamor so loud as completely to drown his voice. Huss stood motionless; he cast his eyes around on the excited assembly, surprise and pity rather than anger visible on his face. Waiting till the tumult had subsided, he again attempted to proceed with his defense. He had not gone far till he had occasion to appeal to the Scriptures; the storm was that moment renewed, and with greater violence than before. Some of the Fathers shouted out accusations, others broke into peals of derisive laughter. Again Huss was silent. "He is dumb," said his enemies, who forgot that they had come there as his judges. "I am silent," said Huss, "because I am unable to make myself audible midst so great a noise." "All," said Luther, referring in his characteristic style to this scene, "all worked themselves into rage like wild boars; the bristles of their back stood on end, they bent their brows and gnashed their teeth against John Huss." ¹³

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¹²Lenfant, *Hist. Counc. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 322. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, chap. 7, p. 122.

¹³Von der Hardt, tom. 4, p. 306. Lenfant, *Hist. Counc. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 323. Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 2, chap. 4. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.*, cent. 15, chap. 7. Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 792.

The minds of the Fathers were too perturbed to be able to agree on the course to be followed. It was found impossible to restore order, and after a short sitting the assembly broke up.

Some Bohemian noblemen, among whom was Baron de Chlum, the steady and most affectionate friend of the Reformer, had been witnesses of the tumult. They took care to inform Sigismund of what had passed, and prayed him to be present at the next sitting, in the hope that, though the Council did not respect itself, it would yet respect the emperor.

After a day's interval the Council again assembled. The morning of that day, the 7th June, was a memorable one. An all but total eclipse of the sun astonished and terrified the venerable Fathers and the inhabitants of Constance. The darkness was great. The city, the lake, and the surrounding plains were buried in the shadow of portentous night. This phenomenon was remembered and spoken of long after in Europe. Till the inauspicious darkness had passed the Fathers did not dare to meet. Towards noon the light returned, and the Council assembled in the hall of the Franciscans, the emperor taking his seat in it. John Huss was led in by a numerous body of armed men. ¹⁴ Sigismund and Huss were now face to face. There sat the emperor, his princes, lords, and suite crowding round him; there, loaded with chains, stood the man for whose safety he had put in pledge his honour as a prince and his power as emperor. The irons that Huss wore were a strange commentary, truly, on the imperial safe-conduct. Is it thus, well might the prisoner have said, is it thus that princes on whom the oil of unction has been poured, and Councils which the Holy Ghost inspires, keep faith? But Sigismund, though he could not be insensible to the silent reproach which the chains of Huss cast upon him, consoled himself with his secret resolve to save the Reformer from the last extremity. He had permitted Huss to be deprived of liberty, but he would not permit him to be deprived of life. But there were two elements he had not taken into account in forming this resolution. The first was the unyielding firmness of the Reformer, and the second was the ghostly awe in which he himself stood of the Council; and so, despite his better

¹⁴Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol 1, p. 323. Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 792. Bonnechose, vol. 2, chap. 4.

intentions, he suffered himself to be dragged along on the road of perfidy and dishonor, which he had meanly entered, till he came to its tragic end, and the imperial safe-conduct and the martyr's stake had taken their place, side by side, ineffaceably, on history's eternal page.

Causis again read the accusation, and a somewhat desultory debate ensued between Huss and several doctors of the Council, especially the celebrated Peter d'Ailly, Cardinal of Cambray. The line of accusation and defense has been sketched with tolerable fullness by all who have written on the Council. After comparing these statements it appears to us that Huss differed from the Church of Rome not so much on dogmas as on great points of jurisdiction and policy. These, while they directly attacked certain of the principles of the Papacy, tended indirectly to the subversion of the whole system - in short, to a far greater revolution than Huss perceived, or perhaps intended. He appears to have believed in transubstantiation; ¹⁵ he declared so before the Council, although in stating his views he betrays ever and anon a revulsion from the grosser form of the dogma. He admitted the Divine institution and office of the Pope and members of the hierarchy, but he made the efficacy of their official acts dependent on their spiritual character. Even to the last he did not abandon the communion of the Roman Church. Still it cannot be doubted that John Huss was essentially a Protestant and a Reformer. He held that the supreme rule of faith and practice was the Holy Scriptures; that Christ was the Rock on which our Lord said he would build his Church; that "the assembly of the Predestinate is the Holy Church, which has neither spot nor wrinkle, but is holy and undefiled; the which Jesus Christ, calleth his own;" that the Church needed no one visible head on earth, that it had none such in the days of the apostles; that nevertheless it was then well governed, and might be so still although it should lose its earthly head; and that the Church was not confined to the clergy, but included all the faithful. He maintained the principle of liberty of conscience so far as that heresy ought not to be punished by the magistrate till the heretic had been convicted out of Holy Scripture. He appears to have laid no weight on excommunications and indulgences, unless in cases in

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¹⁵Lenfant, *Hist. Counc. Const.*, vol. 1, pp. 323, 324.

which manifestly the judgment of God went along with the sentence of the priest. Like Wicliffe he held that tithes were simply alms, and that of the vast temporal revenues of the clergy that portion only which was needful for their subsistence was rightfully theirs, and that the rest belonged to the poor, or might be otherwise distributed by the civil authorities. ¹⁶ His theological creed was only in course of formation. That it would have taken more definite form - that the great doctrines of the Reformation would have come out in full light to his gaze, diligent student as he was of the Bible had his career been prolonged, we cannot doubt. The formula of "justification by faith alone" - the foundation of the teaching of Martin Luther in after days - we do not find in any of the defenses or letters of Huss; but if he did not know the terms he had learned the doctrine, for when he comes to die, turning away from Church, from saint, from all human intervention, he casts himself simply, upon the infinite mercy and love of the Savior. "I submit to the correction of our Divine Master, and I put my trust in his infinite mercy." ¹⁷ "I commend you," says he, writing to the people of Prague, "to the merciful Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, and the Son of the immaculate Virgin Mary, who hath redeemed us by his most bitter death, without all our merits, from eternal pains, from the thralldom of the devil, and from sin." ¹⁸

The members of the Council instinctively felt that Huss was not one of them; that although claiming to belong to the Church which they constituted, he had in fact abandoned it, and renounced its authority. The two leading principles which he had embraced were subversive of their whole jurisdiction in both its branches, spiritual and temporal. The first and great authority with him was Holy Scripture; this struck at the foundation of the spiritual power of the hierarchy; and as regards their temporal power he undermined it by his doctrine touching ecclesiastical revenues and possessions.

From these two positions neither sophistry nor threats could make him swerve. In the judgment of the Council he was in rebellion. He had transferred his allegiance from the Church to God speaking in his Word. This was his great crime. It mattered little in the eyes of

¹⁶The articles condemned by the Council are given in full by Hardouin,

¹⁷Epist. 20.

¹⁸Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 824. Lenfant, Hist. Council Const., vol. 1, bk. 3.

the assembled Fathers that he still shared in some of their common beliefs; he had broken the great bond of submission; he had become the worst of all heretics; he had rent from his conscience the shackles of the infallibility; and he must needs, in process of time, become a more avowed and dangerous heretic than he was at that moment, and accordingly the mind of the Council was made up - John Huss must undergo the doom of the heretic.

Already enfeebled by illness, and by his long imprisonment - for "he was shut up in a tower, with fetters on his legs, that he could scarce walk in the day-time, and at night he was fastened up to a rack against the wall hard by his bed"¹⁹ - he was exhausted and worn out by the length of the sitting, and the attention demanded to rebut the attacks and reasonings of his accusers. At length the Council rose, and Huss was led out by his armed escort, and conducted back to prison. His trusty friend, John de Chlum, followed him, and embracing him, bade him be of good cheer. "Oh, what a consolation to me, in the midst of my trials," said Huss in one of his letters, "to see that excellent nobleman, John de Chlum, stretch forth the hand to me, miserable heretic, languishing in chains, and already condemned by every one."²⁰

In the interval between Huss's second appearance before the Council, and the third and last citation, the emperor made an ineffectual attempt to induce the Reformer to retract and abjure. Sigismund was earnestly desirous of saving his life, no doubt out of regard for Huss, but doubtless also from a regard to his own honour, deeply at stake in the issue. The Council drew up a form of abjuration and submission. This was communicated to Huss in prison, and the mediation of mutual friends was employed to prevail with him to sign the paper. The Reformer declared himself ready to abjure those errors which had been falsely imputed to him, but as regarded those conclusions which had been faithfully deduced from his writings, and which he had taught, these, by the grace of God, he never would abandon. "He would rather," he said, "be cast into the sea with a

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¹⁹Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 793.

²⁰Epist. 32. It ought also to be mentioned that a protest against the execution of Huss was addressed to the Council of Constance, and signed by the principal nobles of Bohemia and Moravia. The original of this protest is preserved in the library of Edinburgh University.

mill-stone about his neck, than offend those little ones to whom he had preached the Gospel, by abjuring it.”²¹ At last the matter was brought very much to this point: would he submit himself implicitly to the Council? The snare was cunningly set, but Huss had wisdom to see and avoid it. “If the Council should even tell you,” said a doctor, whose name has not been preserved, “that you have but one eye, you would be obliged to agree with the Council.” “But,” said Huss, “as long as God keeps me in my senses, I would not say such a thing, even though the whole world should require it, because I could not say it without wounding my conscience.”²² What an obstinate, self-opinionated, arrogant man! said the Fathers. Even the emperor was irritated at what he regarded as stubbornness, and giving way to a burst of passion, declared that such unreasonable obduracy was worthy of death.²³

This was the great crisis of the Reformer’s career. It was as if the Fathers had said, “We shall say nothing of heresy; we specify no errors, only submit yourself implicitly to our authority as an infallible Council. Burn this grain of incense on the altar in testimony of our corporate divinity. That is asking no great matter surely.” This was the fiery temptation with which Huss was now tried. How many would have yielded - how many in similar circumstances have yielded, and been lost! Had Huss bowed his head before the infallibility, he never could have lifted it up again before his own conscience, before his countrymen, before his Savior. Struck with spiritual paralysis, his strength would have departed from him. He would have escaped the stake, the agony of which is but for a moment, but he would have missed the crown, the glory of which is eternal.

From that moment Huss had peace - deeper and more ecstatic than he had ever before experienced. “I write this letter,” says he to a friend, “in prison, and with my fettered hand, expecting my sentence of death tomorrow... When, with the assistance of Jesus Christ, we shall meet again in the delicious peace of the future life, you will learn how merciful God has shown himself towards me - how effectually he has supported me in the midst of my temptations

²¹Concil. Const. - Hardouin, tom. 8, p. 423.

²²Lenfant, Hist. Conc. Const., vol. 1, p. 361.

²³Bonnechose, Reformers before the Reformation, 2. 47.

and trials.”²⁴ The irritation of the debate into which the Council had dragged him was forgotten, and he calmly began to prepare for death, not disquieted by the terrible form in which he foresaw it would come. The martyrs of former ages had passed by this path to their glory, and by the help of Him who is mighty he should be able to travel by the same road to his. He would look the fire in the face, and overcome the vehemency of its flame by the yet greater vehemency of his love. He already tasted the joys that awaited him within those gates that should open to receive him as soon as the fire should loose him from the stake, and set free his spirit to begin its flight on high. Nay, in his prison he was cheered with a prophetic glimpse of the dawn of those better days that awaited the Church of God on earth, and which his own blood would largely contribute to hasten. Once as he lay asleep he thought that he was again in his beloved Chapel of Bethlehem. Envious priests were there trying to efface the figures of Jesus Christ which he had got painted upon its walls. He was filled with sorrow. But next day there came painters who restored the partially obliterated portraits, so that they were more brilliant than before. “‘Now,’ said these artists, ‘let the bishops and the priests come forth; let them efface these if they can;’ and the crowd was filled with joy, and I also.”²⁵

“Occupy your thoughts with your defense, rather than with visions,” said John de Chlum, to whom he had told his dream “And yet,” replied Huss, “I firmly hope that this life of Christ, which I engraved on men’s hearts at Bethlehem when I preached his Word, will not be effaced; and that after I have ceased to live it will be still better shown forth, by mightier preachers, to the great satisfaction of the people, and to my own most sincere joy, when I shall be again permitted to announce his Gospel - that is, when I shall rise from the dead.”²⁶

²⁴Epist. 10.

²⁵Ibid. 44.

²⁶Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, 2. 24.

[161] **Chapter 7: Condemnation and Martyrdom of Huss**

Sigismund and Huss face to face—The Bishop of Lodi's Sermon—Degradation of Huss—His Condemnation—His Prophecy—Procession—His Behaviour at the Stake—Reflections on his Martyrdom

Picture: Trial of Huss: Degrading the Martyr

Picture: Recantation of Jerome

Thirty days elapsed. Huss had languished in prison, contending with fetters, fetid air, and sickness, for about two months. It was now the 6th of July, 1415 - the anniversary of his birth. This day was to see the wishes of his enemies crowned, and his own sorrows terminated. The hall of the Council was filled with a brilliant assemblage. There sat the emperor; there were the princes, the deputies of the sovereigns, the patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, and priests; and there too was a vast concourse which the spectacle that day was to witness had brought together. It was meet that a stage should be erected worthy of the act to be done upon it - that when the first champion in the great struggle that was just opening should yield up his life, all Christendom might see and bear witness to the fact.

The Archbishop of Riga came to the prison to bring Huss to the Council. Mass was being celebrated as they arrived at the church door, and Huss was made to stay outside till it was finished, lest the mysteries should be profaned by the presence of a man who was not only a heretic, but a leader of heretics. ¹ Being led in, he was bidden take his seat on a raised platform, where he might be conspicuously in the eyes of the whole assembly. On sitting down, he was seen to engage in earnest prayer, but the words were not heard. Near him rose a pile of clerical vestments, in readiness for the ceremonies that were to precede the final tragedy. The sermon, usual on such occasions, was preached by the Bishop of Lodi. He chose as his text

¹Op. et Mon. Joan. Huss., tom. 2, p. 344; Noribergae, 1558. Lenfant, Hist. Counc. Const., vol. 1, p. 412.

the words, "That the body of sin might be destroyed." He enlarged on the schism as the source of the heresies, murders, sacrileges, robberies, and wars which had for so long a period desolated the Church, and drew, says Lenfant, "such a horrible picture of the schism, that one would think at first he was exhorting the emperor to burn the two anti-Popes, and not John Huss. Yet the bishop concluded in these terms, addressed to Sigismund: 'Destroy heresies and errors, but chiefly' (pointing to John Huss) 'that OBSTINATE HERETIC.'" ²

The sermon ended, the accusations against Huss were again read, as also the depositions of the witnesses; and then Huss gave his final refusal to abjure. This he accompanied with a brief recapitulation of his proceedings since the commencement of this matter, ending by saying that he had come to this Council of his own free will, "confiding in the safe-conduct of the emperor here present." As he uttered these last words, he looked full at Sigismund, on whose brow the crimson of a deep blush was seen by the whole assembly, whose gaze was at the instant turned towards his majesty. ³

Sentence of condemnation as a heretic was now passed on Huss. There followed the ceremony of degradation - an ordeal that brought no blush upon the brow of the martyr. One after another the priestly vestments, brought thither for that end, were produced and put upon him, and now the prisoner stood full in the gaze of the Council, sacerdotally apparelled. They next put into his hand the chalice, as if he were about to celebrate mass. They asked him if now he were willing to abjure. "With what face, then," replied he, "should I behold the heavens? How should I look on those multitudes of men to whom I have preached the pure Gospel? No; I esteem their salvation more than this poor body, now appointed unto death." ⁴

Then they took from him the chalice, saying, "O accursed Judas, who, having abandoned the counsels of peace, have taken part in

²Lenfant, *Hist. Council. Const.*, vol. 1, p. 413. *Op. et Mon. Joan. Huss.*, tom. 2, p. 346.

³Dissert. *Hist. de Huss*, p. 90; *Jenae*, 1711. *Von der Hardt*, tom. 4, p. 393. Lenfant, vol. 1, p. 422. The circumstance was long after remembered in Germany. A century after, at the Diet of Worms, when the enemies of Luther were importuning Charles V. to have the Reformer seized, notwithstanding the safe-conduct he had given him - "No," replied the emperor, "I should not like to blush like Sigismund." (Lenfant.)

⁴Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 820.

that of the Jews, we take from you this cup filled with the blood of Jesus Christ.”⁵

[162] “I hope, by the mercy of God,” replied John Huss, “that this very

day I shall drink of his cup in his own kingdom; and in one hundred

years you shall answer before God and before me.”⁶

The seven bishops selected for the purpose now came round him, and proceeded to remove the sacerdotal garments - the alb, the stole, and other pieces of attire - in which in mockery they had arrayed him. And as each bishop performed his office, he bestowed his curse upon the martyr. Nothing now remained but to erase the marks of the tonsure.

On this there arose a great dispute among the prelates whether they should use a razor or scissors. “See,” said Huss, turning to the emperor, “they cannot agree among themselves how to insult me.”

[163] They resolved to use the scissors, which were instantly brought, and his hair was cut cross-wise to obliterate the mark of the crown.⁷ According to the canon law, the priest so dealt with becomes again a layman, and although the operation does not remove the character, which is indelible, it yet renders him for ever incapable of exercising the functions of the priesthood.

There remained one other mark of ignominy. They put on his head a cap or pyramidal-shaped miter of paper, on which were painted frightful figures of demons, with the word Arch-Heretic conspicuous in front. “Most joyfully,” said Huss, “will I wear this

⁵Op. et Mon. Joan. Huss., tom. 2, p. 347. Concil. Const. - Hardouin, tom. 8, p. 423.

⁶These words were noted down; and soon after the death of Huss a medal was struck in Bohemia, on which they were inscribed: Centum revolutis annis Deo respondebitis et mihi. Lenfant (lib. c., p. 429, and lib. 4, p. 564) says that this medal was to be seen in the royal archives of the King of Borussia, and that in the opinion of the very learned Schotti, who was then antiquary to the king, it was struck in the fifteenth century, before the times of Luther and Zwingli. The same thing has been asserted by Catholic historians - among others, Peter Matthins, in his History of Henry IV., tom. 2, lib. 5, p. 46. (Vide Sculteti, Annales, p. 7. Gerdesius, Hist. Evang. Renov., pp. 51, 52; Groningae, 1744.) Its date is guaranteed also by M. Bizot, author of Hist. Met. de Hollande.

⁷Op. et Mon. Joan Huss, tom. 2, fol. 347.

crown of shame for thy sake, O Jesus, who for me didst wear a crown of thorns.”⁸

When thus attired, the prelates said, “Now, we devote thy soul to the devil.” “And I,” said John Huss, lifting up his eyes toward heaven, “do commit my spirit into thy hands, O Lord Jesus, for thou hast redeemed me.”

Turning to the emperor, the bishops said, “This man John Huss, who has no more any office or part in the Church of God, we leave with thee, delivering him up to the civil judgment and power.”⁹ Then the emperor, addressing Louis, Duke of Bavaria - who, as Vicar of the Empire, was standing before him in his robes, holding in his hand the golden apple, and the cross - commanded him to deliver over Huss to those whose duty it was to see the sentence executed. The duke in his turn abandoned him to the chief magistrate of Constance, and the magistrate finally gave him into the hands of his officers or city sergeants.

The procession was now formed. The martyr walked between four town sergeants. The princes and deputies, escorted by eight hundred men-at-arms, followed. In the cavalcade, mounted on horseback, were many bishops and priests delicately clad in robes of silk and velvet. The population of Constance followed in mass to see the end.

As Huss passed the episcopal palace, his attention was attracted by a great fire which blazed and crackled before the gates. He was informed that on that pile his books were being consumed. He smiled at this futile attempt to extinguish the light which he foresaw would one day, and that not very distant, fill all Christendom.

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The procession crossed the bridge and halted in a meadow, between the gardens of the city and the gate of Gottlieben. Here the execution was to take place. Being come to the spot where he was to die, the martyr knelt down, and began reciting the penitential psalms. He offered up short and fervent supplications, and oftentimes repeated, as the by-standers bore witness, the words, “Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” “We know not,” said those who were near him, “what his life has been, but verily he prays

⁸Ibid.

⁹Von der Hardt, tom. 4, p. 440. Lenfant, Hist. Counc. Const., vol. 1, pp. 425, 426.

after a devout and godly fashion.” Turning his gaze upward in prayer, the paper crown fell off. One of the soldiers rushed forward and replaced it, saying that “he must be burned with the devils whom he had served.”¹⁰ Again the martyr smiled.

The stake was driven deep into the ground. Huss was tied to it with ropes. He stood facing the east. “This,” cried some, “is not the right attitude for a heretic.” He was again unbound, turned to the west, and made fast to the beam by a chain that passed round his neck. “It is thus,” said he, “that you silence the goose, but a hundred years hence there will arise a swan whose singing you shall not be able to silence.”¹¹

He stood with his feet on the faggots, which were mixed with straw that they might the more readily ignite. Wood was piled all round him up to the chin. Before applying the torch, Louis of Bavaria and the Marshal of the Empire approached, and for the last time implored him to have a care for his life, and renounce his errors. “What errors,” asked Huss, “shall I renounce? I know myself guilty of none. I call God to witness that all that I have written and preached has been with the view of rescuing souls from sin and perdition; and, therefore, most joyfully will I confirm with my blood that truth which I have written and preached.” At the hearing of these words they departed from him, and John Huss had now done talking with men.

The fire was applied, the flames blazed upward. “John Huss,” says Fox, “began to sing with a loud voice, ‘Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.’ And when he began to say the same the third time, the wind so blew the flame in his face that it choked him.” Poggius, who was secretary to the Council, and Aeneas Sylvius, who afterwards became Pope, and whose narratives are not liable to the

¹⁰Op. et Mon. Joan. Huss., tom. 2, fol. 348. Lenfant, Hist. Council. Const., vol. 1, pp. 428 - 430.

¹¹In many principalities money was coined with a reference to this prediction. On one side was the effigy of John Huss, with the inscription, Credo unam esse Ecclesiam Sanctam Catholicam (“I believe in one Holy Catholic Church”). On the obverse was seen Huss tied to the stake and placed on the fire, with the inscription in the center, Johannes Huss, anno a Christo nato 1415 condemnatur (“John Huss, condemned A.D. 1415”); and on the circumference the inscription already mentioned, Centum reolutis annis Deo respondebitis et mihi (“A hundred years hence ye shall answer to God and to me”). - Gerdesius, Hist. Evang. Renov., vol. 1, pp. 51, 52.

suspicion of being colored, bear even higher testimony to the heroic demeanor of both Huss and Jerome at their execution. "Both," says the latter historian, "bore themselves with constant mind when their last hour approached. They prepared for the fire as if they were going to a marriage feast. They uttered no cry of pain. When the flames rose they began to sing hymns; and scarce could the vehemency of the fire stop their singing."¹²

Huss had given up the ghost. When the flames had subsided, it was found that only the lower parts of his body were consumed, and that the upper parts, held fast by the chain, hung suspended on the stake. The executioners kindled the fire anew, in order to consume what remained of the martyr. When the flames had a second time subsided, the heart was found still entire amid the ashes. A third time had the fire to be kindled. At last all was burned. The ashes were carefully collected, the very soil was dug up, and all was carted away and thrown into the Rhine; so anxious were his persecutors that not the slightest vestige of John Huss - not even a thread of his raiment, for that too was burned along with his body - should be left upon the earth.¹³

When the martyr bowed his head at the stake it was the infallible Council that was vanquished. It was with Huss that the victory remained; and what a victory! Heap together all the trophies of Alexander and of Caesar, what are they all when weighed in the balance against this one glorious achievement? From the stake of Huss,¹⁴ what blessings have flowed, and are still flowing, to the

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¹²Aeneas Sylvius, *Hist. Bohem.*, cap. 36, p. 54; apud Gerdesius, *Hist. Evang. Renov.*, vol. 1, p. 42.

¹³"Finally, all being consumed to cinders in the fire, the ashes, and the soil, dug up to a great depth, were placed in wagons, and thrown into the stream of the Rhine, that his very name might utterly perish from among the faithful." (*Op. et Mon. Joan. Huss.*, tom. 2, fol. 348; *Noribergae.*) The details of Huss's martyrdom are very fully given by Fox, by Lenfant, by Bonnechose, and others. These have been faithfully compiled from the Brunswick, Leipsic, and Gotha manuscripts, collected by Von der Hardt, and from the *History of Huss's Life*, published by an eye-witness, and inserted at the beginning of his works. These were never contradicted by any of his contemporaries. Substantially the same account is given by Catholic writers.

¹⁴"The pious remembrance of John Huss," says Lechler, "was held sacred by the nation. The day of his death, 6th July, was incontestably considered from that time onward as the festival of a saint and martyr. It was called "the day of remembrance" of the master John Huss, and even at the end of the sixteenth century the inhabitants of Prague laid

world! From the moment he expired amid the flames, his name became a power, which will continue to speed on the great cause of truth and light, till the last shackle shall be rent from the intellect, and the conscience emancipated from every usurpation, shall be free to obey the authority of its rightful Lord. What a surprise to his and the Gospel's enemies! "Huss is dead," say they, as they retire from the meadow where they have just seen him expire. Huss is dead. The Rhine has received his ashes, and is bearing them on its rushing floods to the ocean, there to bury them for ever. No: Huss is alive. It is not death, but life, that he has found in the fire; his stake has given him not an entombment, but a resurrection. The winds as they blow over Constance are wafting the spirit of the confessor and martyr to all the countries of Christendom. The nations are being stirred; Bohemia is awakening; a hundred years, and Germany and all Christendom will shake off their slumber; and then will come the great reckoning which the martyr's prophetic spirit foretold: "In the course of a hundred years you will answer to God and to me."

such stress on the observances of the day, that the abbot of the monastery Emmaus, Paul Horský, was threatened and persecuted in the worst manner because he had once allowed one to work in his vineyard on Huss's day, as if it were an ordinary workday." It was not uncommon to place pictures of Huss and Jerome on the altars of the parish churches of Bohemia and Moravia. (Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 2, p. 285.) Even at this day, as the author can testify from personal observation, there is no portrait more common in the windows of the print shops of Prague than that of John Huss.

Chapter 8: Wicliffe and Huss Compared in their Theology, their Character, and their Labours

Wicliffe and Huss, Representatives of their Epoch: the Former the Master, the Latter the Scholar—Both Acknowledge the Scriptures to be Supreme Judge and Authority, but Wicliffe more Completely—True Church lies in the “Totality of the Elect”—Wicliffe Fully and Huss more Feebly Accept the Truth of the Sole Mediatorship of Christ—Their Views on the Doctrine of the Sacraments—Lechler’s Contrast between Wicliffe and Huss

Before advancing to the history of Jerome, let us glance back on the two great men, representatives of their epoch, who have passed before us, and note the relations in which they stand to each other. These relations are such that the two always come up together. The century that divides them is annihilated. Everywhere in the history - in the hall of the University of Prague, in the pulpit of the Bethlehem Chapel, in the council chamber of Constance - these two figures, Wicliffe and Huss, are seen standing side by side.

Wicliffe is the master, and Huss the scholar. The latter receives his opinions from the former - not, however, without investigation and proof - and he incorporates them with himself, so to speak, at the cost of a severe mental struggle. “Both men,” says Lechler, “place the Word of God at the foundation of their system, and acknowledge the Holy Scriptures as the supreme judge and authority. Still they differ in many respects. Wicliffe reached his principle gradually, and with laborious effort, whilst Huss accepted it, and had simply to hold it fast, and to establish it.”¹ To Wicliffe the principle was an independent conquest, to Huss it came as a possession which another had won. The opinions of Wicliffe on the head of the sole authority of Scripture were sharply defined, and even received great prominence, while Huss never so clearly defined his sentiments nor gave them the same large place in his teaching. Wicliffe, moreover,

¹Lechler, Johann von Wiclif, vol. 2, p. 266.

[166] repudiated the limitary idea that Scripture was to be interpreted according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, and held that the Spirit makes known the true sense of the Word of God, and that Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture. Huss, on the other hand, was willing to receive the Scriptures as the Holy Ghost had given wisdom to the Fathers to explain them.

“Both Wicliffe and Huss held that ‘the true Church lies in nothing else than the totality of the elect.’ His whole conceptions and ideas of the Church, Huss has derived from no other than the great English Reformer. Wicliffe based the whole of his Church system upon the eternal purposes of God respecting the elect, building up from the foundations, and making his whole plan sublimely accordant with the nature of God, the constitution of the universe, and the divine government of all things. Huss’s conception of the Church lay more on the surface, and the relations between God and his people were with him those of a disciple to his teacher, or a servant to his master.”

As regards the function of Christ as the one Mediator between God and man, Huss was at one with Wicliffe. The English Reformer carried out his doctrine, with the strength and joy of a full conviction, to its logical issue, in the entire repudiation of the veneration and intercession of the saints. Huss, on the other hand, grasping the glorious truth of Christ’s sole mediatorship more feebly, was never able to shake himself wholly free from a dependence on the intercession and good offices of the glorified.

Nor were the views of Huss on the doctrine of the Sacraments nearly so well defined or so accordant with Scripture as those of Wicliffe; and, as has been already said, he believed in transubstantiation to the end. On the question of the Pope’s authority he more nearly approximated Wicliffe’s views; Huss denied the divine right of the Bishop of Rome to the primacy of the Church, and wished to restore the original equality which he held existed among the bishops of the Church. Wicliffe would have gone farther; equality among the priests and not merely among the bishops would alone have contented him.

Lechler has drawn with discriminating hand a contrast between these two men. The power of their intellect, the graces of their character, and the achievements of their lives are finely and sharply brought out in the contrasted lights of the following comparison: -

“Huss is indeed not a primitive, creative, original genius like Wicliffe, and as a thinker neither speculatively inclined nor of systematic talent. In the sphere of theological thinking Wicliffe is a kingly spirit, of an inborn power of mind, and through unwearied mental labor gained the position of a leader of thought; whilst Huss appears as a star of the second magnitude, and planet-like revolves around Wicliffe as his sun. Both indeed circle round the great central Sun, which is Christ himself. Further, Huss is not a character like Wicliffe, twice tempered and sharp as steel - an inwardly strong nature, going absolutely straight forward, without looking on either side, following only his conviction, and carrying it out logically and energetically to its ultimate consequences, sometimes even with a ruggedness and harshness which wounds and repulses. In comparison with Wicliffe, Huss is a somewhat soft personality, finely strung, more receptively and passively inclined than with a vocation for independent power and heroic conquest. Nevertheless, it is not to be inferred that he was a weakling, a characterless, yielding personality. With softness and tenderness of soul it is quite possible to combine a moral toughness, an immutable faith, an unbending firmness, forming a union of qualities which exerts an attractive and winning influence, nay, challenges the highest esteem and veneration.”

“Added to this is the moral purity and unselfishness of the man who exercised an almost ascetic severity towards himself; his sincere fear of God, tender conscientiousness, and heart-felt piety, whereby he cared nothing for himself or his own honour, but before all put the honour of God and his Savior, and next to that the honour of his fatherland, and the unblemished reputation for orthodox piety of his countrymen. In honest zeal for the cause of God and Jesus Christ, both men - Wicliffe and Huss - stand on the same footing. Only in Wicliffe’s case the zeal was of a more fiery, manly, energetic kind, whilst in Huss it burned with a warm, silent glow, in union with almost feminine tenderness, and fervent faith and endurance. And this heart, with all its gentleness, unappalled by even the most terrible death, this unconquerable, this all overcoming patience of the man in his confession of evangelical truth, won for him the affections of his cotemporaries, and made the most lasting impression upon his own times and on succeeding generations. If Wicliffe was surpassingly a man of understanding, Huss was surpassingly a man of feeling;

not of a genial disposition like Luther, but rather of a deep, earnest, gentle nature. Further, if Wicliffe was endowed with a powerful, resolute, manly, energetic will, Huss was gifted with a true, earnest, enduring will. I might say Wicliffe was a man of God, Huss was a child of God; both, however, were heroes in God's host, each according to the gifts which the Spirit of God had lent them, and in each these gifts of mind were used for the good of the whole body.

[167] Measured by an intellectual standard, Huss was certainly not equal to Wicliffe; Wicliffe is by far the greater; he overtops by a head not only other men, but also even a Huss. Despite that, however, John Huss, as far as his character was concerned, for his true noble personality, his conscientious piety, his conquering inviolable faith in the midst of suffering and oppression, was in all respects a worthy follower of Wicliffe, a worthy representative upon the Continent of Europe of the evangelical principle, and of Wicliffe's true, fearless idea of reform, which so loftily upheld the honour of Christ.”²

²Lechler, Johann von Wiclif, vol. 2, pp. 269, 270.

Chapter 9: Trial and Temptation of Jerome

Jerome—His Arrival in Constance—Flight and Capture—His Fall and Repentance—He Rises again

Picture: View on the Rhine: Schaffhausen

Picture: Jerome Speaking at his Trial

We have pursued our narrative uninterruptedly to the close of Huss's life. We must now retrace our steps a little way, and narrate the fate of his disciple and fellow-laborer, Jerome. These two had received the same baptism of faith, and were to drink of the same cup of martyrdom. When Jerome heard of the arrest of Huss, he flew to Constance in the hope of being able to succour, in some way, his beloved master. When he saw that without doing anything for Huss he had brought his own life into peril, he attempted to flee. He was already far on his way back to Prague when he was arrested, and brought to Constance, which he entered in a cart, loaded with chains and guarded by soldiers, as if he had been a malefactor. ¹

On May 23rd, 1415, he appeared before the Council. The Fathers were thrown into tumult and uproar as on the occasion of Huss's first appearance before them. Jerome's assailants were chiefly the doctors, and especially the famous Gerson, with whom he had chanced to dispute in Paris and Heidelberg, when attending the universities of these cities. ² At night he was conducted to the dungeon of a tower in the cemetery of St. Paul. His chains, riveted to a lofty beam, did not

¹Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 1, p. 232.

²“He went to England probably about 1396, studied some years in Oxford, and brought back copies of several of Wicliffe's theological books, which he copied there. We know this from his own testimony before the Council of Constance, on April 27th, 1416. In the course of the trial he answered, among other things, to the accusation that he had published in Bohemia and elsewhere false doctrines from Wicliffe's books: ‘I confess that in my youth I went out of a desire for learning to England, and because I heard of Wicliffe as a man of profound and extraordinary intellect, copied and brought with me to Prague his Dialogue and Trialogue, the MSS. of which I could obtain.’ Jerome was certainly not the first Bohemian student who went from Prague to Oxford.” (Lechler, *Johann von Wiclif*, vol. 2, p. 112.)

permit of his sitting down; and his arms, crossed behind on his neck and tied with fetters, bent his head downward and occasioned him great suffering. He fell ill, and his enemies, fearing that death would snatch him from them, relaxed somewhat the rigor of his treatment; nevertheless in that dreadful prison he remained an entire year.³

Meanwhile a letter was received from the barons of Bohemia, which convinced the Council that it had deceived itself when it fancied it had done with Huss when it threw his ashes into the Rhine. A storm was evidently brewing, and should the Fathers plant a second stake, the tempest would be all the more sure to burst, and with the more awful fury. Instead of burning Jerome, it were better to induce him to recant. To this they now directed all their efforts, and so far they were successful. They brought him before them, and summarily offered him the alternative of retractation or death by fire. Ill in body and depressed in mind from his confinement of four months in a noisome dungeon, cut off from his friends, the most of whom had left Constance when Huss was burned, Jerome yielded to the solicitation of the Council. He shrank from the bitter stake and clung to life.

[168] But his retractation (September 23rd, 1415) was a very qualified one. He submitted himself to the Council, and subscribed to the justice of its condemnation of the articles of Wicliffe and Huss, saving and excepting the "holy truths" which they had taught; and he promised to live and die in the Catholic faith, and never to preach anything contrary to it.⁴ It is as surprising that such an abjuration should have been accepted by the Council, as it is that it should have been emitted by Jerome. Doubtless the little clause in the middle of it reconciled it to his conscience. But one trembles to think of the brink on which Jerome at this moment stood. Having come so far after that master whom he has seen pass through the fire to the sky, is he able to follow him no farther? Huss and Jerome have been lovely in their lives; are they to be divided in their deaths? No! Jerome has fallen in a moment of weakness, but his Master will lift him up

³These particulars are related by Von der Hardt, tom. 4, p. 218; and quoted by Bonnechose, *Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. 1, pp. 236, 237. The Roman writer Cochlaeus also admits the severity of Jerome's imprisonment.

⁴Theod. Urie, apud Von der Hardt, tom. 1, pp. 170, 171. Hardouin, tom. 4, p. 499; tom. 8, pp. 454, 455. Lenfant, *Hist. Counc. Const.*, vol. 1, pp. 510 - 512.

again. And when he is risen the stake will not be able to stop his following where Huss has gone before.

To turn for a moment from Jerome to the Council: we must remark that the minds of the people were, to some extent, prepared for a reformation of the Church by the sermons preached on that subject from time to time by the members of the Council. On September 8th a discourse was delivered on the text in Jeremiah, "Where is the word of the Lord?" The name of the preacher has not been preserved. After a long time spent in inquiring after the Church, she at length appeared to the orator in the form of a great and beautiful queen, lamenting that there was no longer any virtue in the world, and ascribing this to the avarice and ambition of the clergy, and the growth of heresy. "The Church," exclaimed the preacher, "has no greater enemies than the clergy. For who are they that are the greatest opposers of the Reformation? Are they the secular princes? Very far from it, for they are the men who desire it with the greatest zeal, and demand and court it with the utmost earnestness. Who are they who rend the garment of Jesus Christ but the clergy? - who may be compared to hungry wolves, that come into the sheepfolds in lambskins, and conceal ungodly and wicked souls under religious habits." A few days later the Bishop of Lodi, preaching from the words "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," took occasion to inveigh against the Council in similar terms.⁵ It seemed almost as if it was a voluntary penance which the Fathers had set themselves when they permitted one after another of their number to mount the pulpit only to draw their likenesses and to publish their faults. An ugly picture it truly was on which they were invited to gaze, and they had not even the poor consolation of being able to say that a heretic had painted it.

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The abjuration of Jerome, renouncing the errors but adhering to the truths which Wicliffe and Huss had taught, was not to the mind of the majority of the Council. There were men in it who were resolved that he should not thus escape. His master had paid the penalty of his errors with his life, and it was equally determined to spill the blood of the disciple. New accusations were preferred against him, amounting to the formidable number of a hundred and seven.

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⁵Lenfant, vol. 1, p. 506.

It would be extraordinary, indeed, if in so long a list the Council should be unable to prove a sufficient number to bring Jerome to the stake. The indictment now framed against him had reference mainly to the real presence, indulgences, the worship of images and relics, and the authority of the priests. A charge of disbelief in the Trinity was thrown in, perhaps to give all air of greater gravity to the inculcation; but Jerome purged himself of that accusation by reciting the Athanasian Creed.. As regarded transubstantiation, the Fathers had no cause to find fault with the opinions of Huss and Jerome. Both were believers in the real presence. "It is bread before consecration," said Jerome, "it is the body of Christ after."⁶ One would think that this dogma would be the first part of Romanism to be renounced; experience shows that it is commonly the last; that there is in it a strange power to blind, or fascinate, or enthral the mind. Even Luther, a century later, was not able fully to emancipate himself from it; and how many others, some of them in almost the first rank of Reformers, do we find speaking of the Eucharist with a mysticism and awe which show that neither was their emancipation complete! It is one of the greatest marvels in the whole history of Protestantism that Wicliffe, in the fourteenth century, should have so completely rid himself of this enchantment, and from the very midnight of superstition passed all at once into the clear light of reason and Scripture on this point.

As regards the other points included in the inculcation, there is no doubt that Jerome, like his master John Huss, fell below the standard of the Roman orthodox faith. He did not believe that a priest, be he scandalous or be he holy, had power to anathematize whomsoever he would; and pardons and indulgences he held to be worthless unless they came from God.⁷ There is reason, too, to think that his enemies spoke truly when they accused him of showing but scant reverence for relics, and of putting the Virgin's veil, and the

⁶Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 835. "Idem Hieronymus de Sacramento altaris et transubstantione panis in corpus professus est se tenere et credere, quod ecclesia tenet" - that is, "The same Jerome, touching the Sacrament of the altar and transubstantiation, professes to hold and believe that the bread becomes the body, which the Church holds." So says the Council (Hardouin, tom. 8, p. 565.)

⁷The articles of accusation are given in full by Lenfant, in his *Hist. Conc.*, vol. 1, book 4, sec. 75.

skin of the ass on which Christ sat when He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, on the same level as regards their claim to the homage of Christians. And beyond doubt he was equally guilty with Huss in arraiging the priesthood for their avarice, ambition, tyranny, and licentiousness. Of the truth of this charge, Constance itself was a monument.⁸ That city had become a Sodom, and many said that a shower of fire and brimstone only could cleanse it from its manifold and indescribable iniquities. But the truth of the charge made the guilt of Jerome only the more heinous.

Meanwhile Jerome had reflected in his prison on what he had done. We have no record of his thoughts, but doubtless the image of Huss, so constant and so courageous in the fire, rose before him. He contrasted, too, the peace of mind which he enjoyed before his retraction, compared with the doubts that now darkened his soul and shut out the light of God's loving-kindness. He could not conceal from himself the yet deeper abjurations that were before him, before he should finish with the Council and reconcile himself to the Church. On all this he pondered deeply. He saw that it was a gulf that had no bottom, into which he was about to throw himself. There the darkness would shut him in, and he should no more enjoy the society of that master whom he had so greatly revered on earth, nor behold the face of that other Master in heaven, who was the object of his yet higher reverence and love. And for what was he foregoing all these blessed hopes? Only to escape a quarter of an hour's torment at the stake! "I am cast out of Thy sight," said he, in the words of one in a former age, whom danger drove for a time from the path of duty, "but I will look again toward Thy holy temple." And as he looked, God looked on him. The love of his Savior anew filled his soul - that love which is better than life - and with that love returned strength and courage. "No," we hear him say, "although I should stand a hundred ages at the stake, I will not deny my Savior. Now I am ready to face the Council; it can kill the body, but it has no more that it can do." Thus Jerome rose stronger from his fall.

⁸Writing from his prison to his friends in Prague, John Huss said that Constance would hardly recover in thirty years the shock its morality had sustained from the presence of the Council. (Fox.)

Chapter 10: The Trial of Jerome

The Trial of Jerome—Spirit and Eloquence of his Defense—Expresses his Sorrow for his Recantation—Horrors of his Imprisonment—Admiration awakened by his Appearance—Letter of Secretary Poggio—Interview with the Cardinal of Florence

When the accusations were communicated to Jerome, he refused to reply to them in prison; he demanded to be heard in public. With this request his judges deemed it expedient to comply; and on May 23rd, 1416, he was taken to the cathedral church, where the Council had assembled to proceed with his cause. ¹

The Fathers feared exceedingly the effect of the eloquence of their prisoner, and they strove to limit him in his defenses to a simple “Yes” or “No.” “What injustice! What cruelty!” exclaimed Jerome. “You have held me shut up three hundred and forty days in a frightful prison, in the midst of filth, noisomeness, stench, and the utmost want of everything. You then bring me out before you, and lending an ear to my mortal enemies, you refuse to hear me. If you be really wise men, and the lights of the world, take care not to sin against justice. As for me, I am only a feeble mortal; my life is but of little importance; and when I exhort you not to deliver an unjust sentence, I speak less for myself than for you.”

The uproar that followed these words drowned his further utterance. The furious tempest by which all around him were shaken left him untouched. As stands the rock amid the weltering waves, so stood Jerome in the midst of this sea of passion. His face breathing peace, and lighted up by a noble courage, formed a prominent and pleasant picture amid the darkened and scowling visages that filled the hall. When the storm had subsided it was agreed that he should be fully heard at the sitting of the 26th of May.

On that day he made his defense in an oration worthy of his cause, worthy of the stage on which he pleaded it, and of the death

¹Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 834.

by which he was to seal it. Even his bitterest enemies could not withhold the tribute of their admiration at the subtlety of his logic, the resources of his memory, the force of his argument, and the marvelous powers of his eloquence. With great presence of mind he sifted every accusation preferred against him, admitting what was true and rebutting what was false. He varied his oration, now with a pleasantry so lively as to make the stern faces around him relax into a smile,² now with a sarcasm so biting that straightway the smile was changed into rage, and now with a pathos so melting that something like "dewy pity" sat upon the faces of his judges. "Not once," says Poggio of Florence, the secretary, "during the whole time did he express a thought which was unworthy of a man of worth." But it was not for life that he appeared to plead; for life he did not seem to care. All this eloquence was exerted, not to rescue himself from the stake, but to defend and exalt his cause.

Kneeling down in presence of the Council before beginning his defense, he earnestly prayed that his heart and mouth might be so guided as that not one false or unworthy word should fall from him. Then turning to the assembly he reviewed the long roll of men who had stood before unrighteous tribunals, and been condemned, though innocent; the great benefactors of the pagan world, the heroes and patriots of the Old Dispensation, the Prince of martyrs, Jesus Christ, the confessors of the New Dispensation - all had yielded up their life in the cause of righteousness, and by the sentence of mistaken or prejudiced judges. He next recounted his own manner of life from his youth upward; reviewed and examined the charges against him; exposed the prevarications of the witnesses, and, finally, recalled to the minds of his judges how the learned and holy doctors of the primitive Church had differed in their sentiments on certain points, and that these differences had tended to the explication rather than the ruin of the faith.

The Council was not unmoved by this address; it awoke in some breasts a sense of justice - we cannot say pity, for pity Jerome did not ask - and not a few expressed their astonishment that a man who had been shut up for months in a prison, where he could see neither

²““There goeth a great rumor of thee,” said one of hie accusers, “that thou holdest bread to be on the altar;” to whom he pleasantly answered, saying “that he believed bread to be at the bakers.”” (Fox, vol. 1, p. 835.)

[172] to read nor to write, should yet be able to quote so great a number of authorities and learned testimonies in support of his opinions.³ The Council forgot that it had been promised, “When ye are brought before rulers and kings for my sake,... take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.”

(Mark 13:9, 11)

Jerome at his former appearance before the Council had subscribed to the justice of Huss’s condemnation. He bitterly repented of this wrong, done in a moment of cowardice, to a master whom he venerated, and he cannot close without an effort to atone for it.⁴ “I knew him from his childhood,” said he, speaking of Huss; “he was a most excellent man, just and holy. He was condemned notwithstanding his innocence. He has ascended to heaven, like Elias, in the midst of flames, and from thence he will summon his judges to the dread tribunal of Christ. I also - I am ready to die. I will not recoil before the torments which are prepared for me by my enemies and false witnesses, who will one day have to render an account of their impostures before the great God whom nothing can deceive.”⁵

The Council was visibly agitated. Some desired to save the life of a man so learned and eloquent. The spectacle truly was a grand one. Pale, enfeebled by long and rigorous confinement, and loaded with fetters, he yet compelled the homage of those before whom he stood, by his intellectual and moral grandeur. He stood in the midst of the Council, greater than it, throwing its assembled magnificence into the shade by his individual glory, and showing himself more illustrious by his virtues and sufferings than they by their stars and miters. Its princes and doctors felt humbled and abashed in presence of their own prisoner.

But in the breast of Jerome there was no feeling of self-exaltation. If he speaks of himself it is to accuse himself.

³See letter of Poggio of Florence, secretary to Pope John XXIII., addressed to Leonardo Aretino, given in full by Lenfant in his *Hist. Conc.*, vol 1, book 4, pp. 593 - 599; Lond., 1730.

⁴Lenfant, vol. 1, pp. 585, 586.

⁵Ibid. 1. 590, footnote.

“Of all the sins,” he continued, “that I have committed since my youth, none weighs so heavily on my mind, and causes me such poignant remorse, as that which I committed in this fatal place, when I approved of the iniquitous sentence recorded against Wicliffe, and against the holy martyr John Huss, my master and my friend. Yes, I confess it from my heart, and declare with horror that I disgracefully quailed when, through a dread of death, I condemned their doctrines. I therefore supplicate Almighty God to deign to pardon me my sins, and this one in particular, the most heinous of all. ⁶ You condemned Wicliffe and Huss, not because they shook the faith, but because they branded with reprobation the scandals of the clergy - their pomp, their pride, and their luxuriousness.”

These words were the signal for another tumult in the assembly. The Fathers shook with anger. From all sides came passionate exclamations. “He condemns himself. What need have we of further proof? The most obstinate of heretics is before us.”

Lifting up his voice - which, says Poggio, “was touching, clear, and sonorous, and his gesture full of dignity” - Jerome resumed: “What! do you think that I fear to die? You have kept me a whole year in a frightful dungeon, more horrible than death. You have treated me more cruelly than Saracen, Turk, Jew, or Pagan, and my flesh has literally rotted off my bones alive; and yet I make no complaint, for lamentation ill becomes a man of heart and spirit, but I cannot but express my astonishment at such great barbarity towards a Christian.”

The clamor burst out anew, and the sitting closed in confusion. Jerome was carried back to his dungeon, where he experienced more rigorous treatment than ever. His feet, his hands, his arms were loaded with fetters. This severity was not needed for his safe-keeping, and could have been prompted by nothing but a wish to add to his torments. ⁷

Admiration of his splendid talents made many of the bishops take an interest in his fate. They visited him in his prison, and conjured him to retract. “Prove to me from the Scriptures,” was Jerome’s reply to all these importunities, “that I am in error.” The

⁶Hardouin, Collect. Barberin., tom. 8, pp. 565, 567.

⁷Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 836. Bonnechose, vol. 2, p. 154.

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Cardinal of Florence, Zabarella, sent for him,⁸ and had a lengthened conversation with him. He extolled the choice gifts with which he had been enriched; he dwelt on the great services which these gifts might enable him to render to the Church, and on the brilliant career open to him, would he only reconcile himself to the Council; he said that there was no office of dignity, and no position of influence, to which he might not aspire, and which he was not sure to win, if he would but return to his spiritual obedience; and was it not, he asked, the height of folly to throw away all these splendid opportunities and prospects by immolating himself on the heretic's pile? But Jerome was not moved by the words of the cardinal, nor dazzled by the brilliant offers he made him. He had debated that matter with himself in prison, in tears and agonies, and he had made up his mind once for all. He had chosen the better part. And so he replied to this tempter in purple as he had done to those in lawn, "Prove to me from the Holy Writings that I am in error, and I will abjure it."

"The Holy Writings!" scornfully replied the cardinal; "is everything then to be judged by them? Who can understand them till the Church has interpreted them?"

"What do I hear?" cried Jerome; "are the traditions of men more worthy of faith than the Gospel of our Savior? Paul did not exhort those to whom he wrote to listen to the traditions of men, but said, 'Search the Scriptures.'"

"Heretic," said the cardinal, fixing his eyes upon him and regarding him with looks of anger, "I repent having pleaded so long with you. I see that you are urged on by the devil."⁹ Jerome was remanded to his prison.

⁸Hardouin, *Acta Concil.*, tom. 8, p. 566.

⁹Theobald, *Bell. Huss.*, chap. 24, p. 60; apud Bonnechose, vol. 2, p. 159. Letter of Poggio to Aretino. This cardinal died suddenly at the Council (September 26th, 1417). Poggio pronounced his funeral oration. He extolled his virtue and genius. Had he lived till the election of a new Pope, it is said, the choice of the conclave would have fallen upon him. He is reported to have written a history of the Council of Pisa, and of what passed at Constance in his time. These treatises would possess great interest, but they have never been discovered. Mayhap they lie buried in the dust of some monastic library.

Chapter 11: Condemnation and Burning of Jerome

Jerome Condemned—Apparelled for the Fire—Led away—Sings at the Stake—His Ashes given to the Rhine

Picture: Trial of Jerome: Waiting for the Sentence

Picture: As they were leading him out of the church...he began to sing, 'Credo in unum Deum'

On the 30th of May, 1416, Jerome was brought to receive his sentence. The grandees of the Empire, the dignitaries of the Church, and the officials of the Council filled the cathedral. What a transition from the gloom of his prison to this brilliant assembly, in their robes of office and their stars of rank! But neither star of prince nor miter of bishop was so truly glorious as the badges which Jerome wore - his chains.

The troops were under arms. The townspeople, drawn from their homes by the rumor of what was about to take place, crowded to the cathedral gates, or pressed into the church.

Jerome was asked for the last time whether he were willing to retract; and on intimating his refusal he was condemned as a heretic, and delivered up to the secular power. This act was accompanied with a request that the civil judge would deal leniently with him, and spare his life,¹ a request scarcely intelligible when we think that the stake was already planted, that the faggots were already prepared, and that the officers were in attendance to lead him to the pile.

Jerome mounted on a bench that he might the better be heard by the whole assembly. All were eager to catch his last words. He again gave expression to his sorrow at having, in a moment of fear, given his approval of the burning of John Huss. He declared that the

¹Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 837. Lenfant, vol. 1, p. 591. This was the usual request of the inquisitors when delivering over their victims to the executioner. No one would have been more astonished and displeased than themselves to find the request complied with. "Eundo ligatus per plateas versus locum supplicii in quo combustus fuit, licet prius domini proelati supplicabant potestati saeculari, ut ipsi eum tractarent gratiose." (Collect. Barberin. - Hardouin, tom. 8, p. 567.)

sentence now pronounced on himself was wicked and unjust, like that inflicted upon that holy man. "In dying," said he, "I shall leave a sting in your hearts, and a gnawing worm in your consciences. And I cite you all to answer to me before the most high and just Judge within all hundred years."²

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A paper miter was now brought in, with red devils painted upon it. When Jerome saw it he threw his cap on the floor among the cardinals, and put the miter upon his head, accompanying the act with the words which Huss had used on a similar occasion: "As my Lord for me did wear a crown of thorn, so I, for Him, do wear with joy this crown of ignominy." The soldiers now closed round him. As they were leading him out of the church, "with a cheerful countenance," says Fox, "and a loud voice, lifting his eyes up to heaven, he began to sing, 'Credo in unum Deum,' as it is accustomed to be sung in the Church." As he passed along through the streets his voice was still heard, clear and kind, singing Church canticles. These he finished as he came to the gate of the city leading to Gottlieben, and then he began a hymn, and continued singing it all the way to the place of execution. The spot where he was to suffer was already consecrated ground to Jerome, for here John Huss had been burned. When he came to the place he kneeled down and began to pray. He was still praying when his executioners raised him up, and with cords and chains bound him to the stake, which had been carved into something like a rude likeness of Huss. When the wood and faggots began to be piled up around him, he again began to sing, "Hail, happy day!" When that hymn was ended, he sang once more, "Credo in unum Deum," and then he addressed the people, speaking to them in the German tongue, and saying, "Dearly-beloved children, as I have now sung, so do I believe, and none otherwise; and this creed is my whole faith."

The wood was heaped up to his neck, his garments were then thrown upon the pile, and last of all the torch was brought to light the mass. His Savior, who had so graciously supported him amid his dreadful sufferings in prison, was with him at the stake. The courage that sustained his heart, and the peace that filled his soul,

²"Et cito vos omnes, ut respondeatis mihi coram altissimo et justissimo Judice post centum annos." (Fox, vol. 1, p. 836. Op. Huss., tom. 2, fol. 357. Lenfant, vol. 1, p. 589.)

were reflected upon his countenance, and struck the beholders. One short, sharp pang, and then the sorrows of earth will be all behind, and the everlasting glory will have come. Nay, it was already come; for, as Jerome stood upon the pile, he looked as one who had gotten the victory over death, and was even now tasting the joys to which he was about to ascend. The executioner was applying the torch behind, when the martyr checked him. “Come forward,” said he, “and kindle the pile before my face; for had I been afraid of the fire I should not be here.”³

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When the faggots began to burn, Jerome with a loud voice began to sing “Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit.” As the flame waxed fiercer and rose higher, and the martyr felt its scorching heat, he was heard to cry out in the Bohemian language, “O Lord God, Father Almighty, have mercy upon me, and be merciful unto mine offenses, for Thou knewest how sincerely I have loved Thy truth.”⁴

Soon after the flame checked his utterance, and his voice ceased to be heard. But the movement of his head and rapid motion of his lips, which continued for about a quarter of an hour, showed that he was engaged in prayer. “So burning in the fire,” says Fox, “he lived with great pain and martyrdom whilst one might easily have gone from St. Clement’s over the bridge unto our Lady Church.”⁵

When Jerome had breathed his last, the few things of his which had been left behind in his prison were brought out and burned in the same fire. His bedding, his boots, his hood, all were thrown upon the still smoldering embers and consumed. The heap of ashes was then carefully gathered up, and put into a cart, and thrown into the Rhine. Now, thought his enemies, there is an end of the Bohemian heresy. We have seen the last of Huss and Jerome. The Council may now sleep in peace. How short-sighted the men who so thought

³Bonnechose, vol. 2.

⁴Enemies and friends unite in bearing testimony to the fortitude and joy with which Jerome endured the fire. “In the midst of the scorching flames,” says the monk Theodoric Urie, “he sang those words, ‘O Lord, into Thy hands I resign my spirit;’ and just as he was saying, ‘Thou hast redeemed us,’ he was suffocated by the flame and the smoke, and gave up his wretched soul. Thus did this heretical miscreant resign his miserable spirit to be burned everlastingly in the bottomless pit.” (Urie, apud Von der Hardt, tom. 1, p. 202. Lenfant, vol. 1, p. 593.)

⁵Theobald, Bell. Hus., p. 61. Von der Hardt, tom. 4, p. 772; apud Lenfant, vol. 1, p. 592. Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. 1, p. 838.

and spoke! Instead of having stamped out this heresy, they had but scattered its seeds over the whole face of Christendom; and, so far from having erased the name and memory of Huss and Jerome, and consigned them to an utter oblivion, they had placed them in the eyes of the whole world, and made them eternal.

We have recorded with some minuteness these two martyrdoms. We have done so not only because of the rare qualities of the men who endured them, the tragic interest that belongs to their sufferings, and the light which their story throws upon their lives, but because Providence gave their deaths a representative character, and a moulding influence. These two martyr-piles were kindled as beacon-lights in the dawn of modern history. Let us briefly show why.

Chapter 12: Wicliffe, Huss, and Jerome, or the First Three Witnesses of Modern Christendom

Great Eras and their Heralds—Dispensation for the Approach of which Wicliffe was to Prepare the Way—The Work that Wicliffe had done—Huss and Jerome follow Wicliffe—The Three Witnesses of Modern Christendom

Each new era, under the Old Dispensation, was ushered in by the ministry of some man of great character and splendid gifts, and the exhibition of miracles of stupendous grandeur. This was needful to arouse and fix the attention of men, to tell them that the ages were passing, that God was “changing the times and the seasons,” and bringing in a new order of things. Gross and brutish, men would otherwise have taken no note of the revolutions of the moral firmament. Abraham stands at the head of one dispensation; Moses at that of another; David at the head of a third; and John the Baptist occupies the van in the great army of the preachers, confessors and martyrs of the Evangelic Dispensation. These are the four mighties who preceded the advent of One who was yet mightier.

And so was it when the time drew nigh that a great moral and spiritual change should pass over the world, communicating a new life to Churches, and a liberty till then unknown to nations. When that era approached Wicliffe was raised up. Abundantly anointed with that Holy Spirit of which Councils and Popes vainly imagined they had an exclusive monopoly, what a deep insight he had into the Scriptures; how firmly and clearly was he able to lay hold of the scheme of Free Salvation revealed in the Bible; how completely did he emancipate himself from the errors that had caused so many ages to miss the path which he found, and which he found not by a keener subtilty or a more penetrating intellect than that of his contemporaries, but simply by his profound submission to the Bible. As John the Baptist emerged from the very bosom of Pharisaical legalism and traditionalism to become the preacher of repentance

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and forgiveness, so Wicliffe came forth from the bosom of a yet more indurated traditionalism, and of a legalism whose iron yoke was a hundred times heavier than that of Pharisaism, to preach repentance to Christendom, and to proclaim the great Bible truth that Christ's merits are perfect and cannot be added to; for God bestows His salvation upon men freely, and that "he that believeth on the Son hath life."

So had Wicliffe spoken. Though his living voice was now silent, he was, by his writings, at that hour publishing God's re-discovered message in all the countries of Europe. But witnesses were needed who should come after Wicliffe, and attest his words, and seal with their blood the doctrine which he had preached. This was the office to which Huss and Jerome were appointed. First came the great preacher; after him came the two great martyrs, attesting that Wicliffe had spoken the truth, and sealing their testimony with their lives. At the mouth of these Three, Christendom had admonition tendered to it. They said to an age sunk in formalism and legalism,

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" ([Acts 3:19](#)).

Such is the place which these two martyrdoms occupy, and such is the importance which attaches to them. If proof of this were needed, we have it in the proceedings of the Council of Constance. The Fathers, not knowing what they did, first and with much solemnity condemned the doctrines of Wicliffe; and in the next place, they burned at the stake Huss and Jerome for adhering to these doctrines. Yes, the Spirit of God was present at Constance, guiding the Council in its decisions, but after a different fashion, and toward another and different end, than the Fathers dreamed of.

The "still small voice," which was now heard speaking in Christendom after ages of silence, must needs be followed by mighty signs - not physical, but moral - not changes in the sky, but changes still more wonderful in the hearts of men. And such was the phenomenon displayed to the eyes of the men of that age in the testimony of Huss and Jerome. All about that testimony was arranged by God with the view of striking the imagination and, if possible, convincing the understandings of those before whom it was borne. It was even invested with dramatic effect, that nothing might be wanting to gain its

end, and leave those who resisted it without excuse. A conspicuous stage was erected for that testimony; all Christendom was assembled to hear it. The witnesses were illustrious for their great intellectual powers. These compelled the attention and extorted the admiration even of their enemies. Yet more illustrious were they for their spiritual graces - their purity, their humility, their patience of suffering, their forgiveness of wrong, their magnanimity and noble mindedness - the garlands that adorned these victims. And the splendor of these virtues was brought out in relief against the dark background of an age woefully corrupt, and the yet darker background of a Council whose turpitude rotted the very soil on which it met, poisoned the very air, and bequeathed to history one of the foulest blots that darken it. And to crown all there comes, last and highest, the glory of their deaths, tarnished by no dread of suffering, by no prayer for deliverance, by no tear shed over their fate, by no cry wrung from them by pain and anguish; but, on the contrary, glorified by their looks of gladness as they stood at the stake, and the triumphant hallelujahs which they sang amid the fires.

Such was the testimony of these three early witnesses of Christendom, and such were the circumstances that adapted it to the crisis at which it was borne. Could portent in the sky, could even preacher from the dead, have been so emphatic? To a sensual age, sunk in unbelief, without faith in what was inward, trusting only in what it saw or did, and content with a holiness that was entirely dissevered from moral excellence and spiritual virtue, how well fitted was this to testify that there was a diviner agency than the ghostly power of the priesthood, which could transform the soul and impart a new life to men - in short, that the early Gospel had returned to the world, and that with it was returning the piety, the self-sacrifice, and the heroism of early times!

God, who brings forth the natural day by gradual stages - first the morning star, next the dawn, and next the great luminary whose light brightens as his orb ascends, till from his meridian height he sheds upon the earth the splendors of the perfect day - that same God brought in, in like manner, by almost imperceptible stages, the evangelical day. Claudius and Berengarius, and others, were the morning stars; they appeared while as yet all was dark. With Wicliffe the dawn broke; souls caught its light in France, in Italy,

and especially in Bohemia. They in their turn became light-bearers to others, and thus the effulgence continued to spread, till at last, “centum revo-
luti-
tis annis,” the day shone out in the ministry of the Reformers of the sixteenth century.

Chapter 13: The Hussite Wars

Effect of Huss's Martyrdom in Bohemia—Spread of Hussism—The New Pope—Formalities of Election—Enthronisation—Bull against the Hussites—Pope's Departure for Rome—Ziska—Tumults in Prague

Picture: Map of Bohemia, Moravia, and Bavaria

Picture: Departure of Pope Martin V. for Rome

Huss had been burned; his ashes, committed to the Rhine, had been borne away to their dark sepulcher in the ocean; but his stake had sent a thrill of indignation and horror through Bohemia. His death moved the hearts of his countrymen more powerfully than even his living voice had been able to do. The vindicator of his nation's wrongs - the reformer of his nation's religion - in short, the representative man of Bohemia, had been cruelly, treacherously immolated; and the nation took the humiliation and insult as done to itself. All ranks, from the highest to the lowest, were stirred by what had occurred. The University of Prague issued a manifesto addressed to all Christendom, vindicating the memory of the man who had fallen a victim to the hatred of the priesthood and the perfidy of the emperor. His death was declared to be murder, and the Fathers at Constance were styled "an assembly of the satraps of Antichrist." Every day the flame of the popular indignation was burning more fiercely. It was evident that a terrible outburst of pent-up wrath was about to be witnessed in Bohemia.

The barons assumed a bolder tone. When the tidings of Huss's martyrdom arrived, the magnates and great nobles held a full council, and, speaking in the name of the Bohemian nation, they addressed an energetic protest to Constance against the crime there enacted. They eulogized, in the highest terms, the man whom the Council had consigned to the flames as a heretic, calling him the "Apostle of Bohemia; a man innocent, pious, holy, and a faithful teacher of

the truth.”¹ Holding the pen in one hand, while the other rested on their sword’s hilt, they said, “Whoever shall affirm that heresy is spread abroad in Bohemia, lies in his throat, and is a traitor to our kingdom; and, while we leave vengeance to God, to Whom it belongs, we shall carry our complaints to the footstool of the indubitable apostolic Pontiff, when the Church shall again be ruled by such an one; declaring, at the same time, that no ordinance of man shall hinder our protecting the humble and faithful preachers of the words of our Lord Jesus, and our defending them fearlessly, even to the shedding of blood.” In this remonstrance the nobles of Moravia concurred.²

But deeper feelings were at work among the Bohemian people than those of anger. The faith which had produced so noble a martyr was compared with the faith which had immolated him, and the contrast was found to be in no wise to the advantage of the latter. The doctrines which Huss had taught were recalled to memory now that he was dead. The writings of Wicliffe, which had escaped the flames, were read, and compared with such portions of Holy Writ as were accessible to the people, and the consequence was a very general reception of the evangelical doctrines. The new opinions struck their roots deeper every day, and their adherents, who now began to be called Hussites, multiplied one might almost say hourly.

[179] The throne of Bohemia was at that time filled by Wenceslaus, the son of the magnanimous and patriotic Charles IV. In this grave position of affairs much would of necessity depend on the course the king might adopt. The inheritor of his father’s dignities and honors, Wenceslaus did not inherit his father’s talents and virtues. A tyrant and voluptuary, he had been dethroned first by his nobles, next by his own brother Sigismund, King of Hungary; but, regaining his throne, he discovered an altered but not improved disposition. Broken in spirit, he was now as supine and lethargic as formerly he had been overbearing and tyrannical. If his pride was stifled and his violence curbed, he avenged himself by giving the reins to his low propensities and vices. Shut up in his palace, and leading the life of a sensualist, the religious opinions of his subjects were to him matters

¹Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, cap. 9, p. 33.

²Huss. *Mon.*, vol. 1, p. 99.

of almost supreme indifference. He cared but little whether they kept the paths of orthodoxy or strayed into those of heresy. He secretly rejoiced in the progress of Hussism, because he hoped the end would be the spoiling of the wealthy ecclesiastical corporations and houses, and that the lion's share would fall to himself. Disliking the priests, whom he called "the most dangerous of all the comedians," he turned a deaf ear to the ecclesiastical authorities when they importuned him to forbid the preaching of the new opinions.³

The movement continued to make progress. Within four years from the death of Huss, the bulk of the nation had embraced the faith for which he died. His disciples included not a few of the higher nobility, many of the wealthy burghers of the towns, some of the inferior clergy, and the great majority of the peasantry. The accession of the latter, whose single-heartedness makes them capable of a higher enthusiasm and a more entire devotion, brought great strength to the cause. It made it truly national. The Bohemians now resumed in their churches the practice of Communion in both kinds, and the celebration of their worship in the national language. Rome had signalled their subjugation by forbidding the cup, and permitting prayers only in Latin. The Bohemians, by challenging freedom in both points, threw off the marks of their Roman vassalage.

A slight divergence of sentiment was already traceable among the Hussites. One party entirely rejected the authority of the Church of Rome, and made the Scriptures their only standard. These came to bear the name of Taborites, from the scene of one of their early encampments, which was a hill in the neighborhood of Prague bearing a resemblance, it was supposed, to the Scriptural Tabor. The other party remained nominally in the communion of Rome, though they had abandoned it in heart. Their distinctive tenet was the cup or chalice, meaning thereby Communion in both kinds; hence their name, Calixtines.⁴ The cup became the national Protestant symbol. It was blazoned on their standards and carried in the van of their armies; it was sculptured on the portals of their churches, and set up over the gates of their cities. It was ever placed in studied contrast to the Roman symbol, which was the cross. The latter, the Hussites

³Krasinski, *Religious History of the Slavonic Nations*, p. 66; Edin., 1849. John von Muller, *Universal History*, vol. 2, p. 264; Lond., 1818.

⁴Lenfant, vol. 2, p. 240.

said, recalled scenes of suffering, and so was an emblem of gloom; the former, the cup, was the sign of an accomplished redemption, and so a symbol of gladness. This divergence of the two parties was meanwhile only incipient. It widened in process of time; but for years the great contest in which the Hussites were engaged with Rome, and which assembled Taborites and Calixtines on the same battle-field, where they joined their prayers as well as their arms, kept them united in one body.

We must bestow a glance on what meanwhile was transacting at Constance. The Council knew that a fire was smoldering in Bohemia, and it did its best to fan it into a conflagration. The sentence of utter extermination, pronounced by old Rome against Carthage, was renewed by Papal Rome against Bohemia, a land yet more accursed than Carthage, overrun by heresy, and peopled by men not worthy to enjoy the light of day.⁵ But first the Council must select a new Pope. The conclave met; and being put upon “a thin diet,”⁶ the cardinals came to an early decision. In their haste to announce the great news to the outer world, they forced a hole in the wall, and shouted out, “We have a Pope, and Otho de Colonna is he!” (November 14th, 1417.)

Acclamations of voices and the pealing of bells followed this announcement, in the midst of which the Emperor Sigismund entered the conclave, and, in the first burst of his joy or superstition, falling down before the newly elected Pope, he kissed the feet of the Roman Father.

The doors of the conclave being now thrown open, the cardinals eagerly rushed out, glad to find themselves again in the light of day. Their temporary prison was so guarded and shut in that even the sun’s rays were excluded, and the Fathers had to conduct their business with the light of wax tapers. They had been shut up only from the 8th to the 11th of November, but so thin and altered were their visages when they emerged, owing to the meager diet on which they were compelled to subsist, that their acquaintances had some difficulty in recognizing them. There were fifty-three electors in all -

[180] twenty-three cardinals, and thirty deputies of the nations - for whom

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⁵Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 34.

⁶Fox, vol. 1, p. 847.

fifty-three separate chambers had been prepared, and distributed by lot. They were forbidden all intercourse with their fellow-electors within the conclave, as well as with their friends outside, and even the dishes which were handed in to them at a window were carefully searched, lest they should conceal contraband letters or missives. Proclamation was made by a herald that no one was to come within a certain specified distance of the conclave, and it was forbidden, under pain of excommunication, to pillage the house of the cardinal who might happen to be elected Pope. It was a custom at Rome to hold the goods of the cardinal elect a free booty, on pretense that being now arrived at all riches he had no further need of anything. At the gates of the conclave the emperor and princes kept watch day and night, singing devoutly the hymn "Veni Creator," but in a low strain, lest the deliberations within should be disturbed. The election was finished in less time than is usually required to fill the Papal chair. The French and Spanish members of the conclave contended for a Pope of their own nation, but the matter was cut short by the German deputies, who united their votes in favor of the Italian candidate, and so the affair issued in the election of Otho, of the most noble and ancient house of Colonna. His election falling on the fete of St. Martin of Tours, he took the title of Martin V. ⁷ Platina, who is not very lavish of his incense to Popes, commends his prudence, good-nature, love of justice, and his dexterity in the management of affairs and of tempers. ⁸ Windeck, one of Sigismund's privy councilors, says, in his history of the emperor, that the Cardinal de Colonna was poor and modest, but that Pope Martin was very covetous and extremely rich. ⁹

A few hours after the election, through the same streets along which Huss and Jerome had been led in chains to the stake, there swept another and very different procession. The Pope was going in state to be enthroned. He rode on a white horse, covered with rich scarlet housings. The abbots and bishops, in robes of white silk, and

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⁷A decree of Nicholas II. (1059) restricts the franchise to the college of cardinals; a decree of Alexander III. (1159) requires a majority of votes of at least two-thirds; and a decree of Gregory X. (1271) requires nine days between the death of the Pope and the meeting of the cardinals. The election of Martin V. was somewhat abnormal.

⁸Platina, *Hist. Som. Pont.*, 212; Venetia, 1600.

⁹Von der Hardt, tom. 4, pp. 1479, 1423. Lenfant, vol 2, pp. 156 - 167.

mounted on horses, followed in his train. The Pontiff's bridle-rein was held on the right by the emperor, and on the left by the Elector of Brandenburg,¹⁰ these august personages walking on foot. In this fashion was he conducted to the cathedral, where seated on the high altar he was incensed and received homage under the title of Martin V.¹¹

Bohemia was one of the first cares of the newly anointed Pope. The great movement which had Wicliffe for its preacher, and Huss and Jerome for its martyrs, was rapidly advancing. The Pope hurled excommunication against it, but he knew that he must employ other and more forcible weapons besides spiritual ones before he could hope to crush it. He summoned the emperor to give to the Papal See worthier and more substantial proofs of devotion than the gala service of holding his horse's bridle-rein. Pope Martin V., addressing himself to Sigismund, with all the kings, princes, dukes, barons, knights, states, and commonwealths of Christendom, adjured them, by "the wounds of Christ," to unite their arms and exterminate that "sacrilegious and accursed nation."¹² A liberal distribution was promised of the customary rewards - crowns and high places in Paradise - to those who should display the most zeal against the obnoxious heresy by shedding the greatest amount of Bohemian blood. Thus exhorted, the Emperor Sigismund and several of the neighboring German states made ready to engage in the crusade. The Bohemians saw the terrible tempest gathering on their borders, but they were not dismayed by it.

While this storm is brewing at Prague, we shall return for the last time to Constance; and there we find that considerable self-satisfaction is prevalent among the members of the Council, which has concluded its business amid general felicitations and loud boastings that it had pacified Christendom. It had extinguished heresy by the stakes of Huss and Jerome. It had healed the schism by the deposition of the rival Popes and the election of Martin V. It had shot a bolt at Bohemian discontent which would save all further annoyance on

¹⁰Lenfant, vol. 2, p. 174.

¹¹Bonnechose, vol. 2, p. 196.

¹²Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 35: "Sacrilegamque et maledictam gentem exterminare penitus." See also Lenfant, vol. 2, bk. 6, chap. 51. *Concil. Const.* - Hard., tom. 8, p. 918.

that side; and now, as the result of these vigorous measures, an era of tranquillity to Europe and of grandeur to the Popedom might be expected henceforth to commence. Deafened by its own praises, the Council took no note of the underground mutterings, which in all countries betokened the coming earthquake. On the 18th of April, 1418, the Pope promulgated a bull “declaring the Council at an end, and giving every one liberty to return home.” As a parting gift he bestowed upon the members “the plenary remission of all their sins.” If only half of what is reported touching the doings of the Fathers at Constance be true, this beneficence of Pope Martin must have constituted a very large draft indeed on the treasury of the Church; but doubtless it sent the Fathers in good spirits to their homes.

On the 15th of May the Pope sang his last mass in the cathedral church, and next day set out on his return for Italy. The French prelates prayed him to establish his chair at Avignon, a request that had been made more than once of his predecessors without avail. But the Pope told them that “they must yield to reason and necessity; that as he had been acknowledged by the whole world for St. Peter’s successor, it was but just that he should go and seat himself on the throne of that apostle; and that as the Church of Rome was the head and mother of all the Churches, it was absolutely necessary that the sovereign Pontiff should reside at Rome, as a good pilot ought to keep at the stern and not at the prow of the vessel.”¹³ Before turning to the tragic scenes on the threshold of which we stand, let us bestow a moment’s glance on the gaudy yet ambitious pomp that marked the Pope’s departure for Rome. It is thus related by Reichenthal: -

“Twelve led horses went first, with scarlet housings; which were followed by four gentlemen on horseback, bearing four cardinals’ caps upon pikes. After them a priest marched, beating a cross of gold; who was followed by another priest, that carried the Sacrament. Twelve cardinals marched next, adorned with their red hats, and followed by a priest tiding on a white horse, and offering the Sacrament to the populace, under a kind of canopy surrounded by men bearing wax tapers. After him followed John de Susate, a divine of Westphalia, who likewise carried a golden cross, and was encompassed by the canons and senators of the city, beating wax

¹³Platina, *Hist. Som. Pont.*, 213. Lenfant, vol. 2, p. 274.

[183] tapers in their hands. At last the Pope appeared in his Pontificalibus, riding on a white steed. He had upon his head a tiara, adorned with a great number of jewels, and a canopy was held over his head by four counts - viz., Eberhard, Count of Nellenburg; William, Count of Montserrat; Berthold, Count of Ursins; and John, Count de Thirstein. The emperor held the reins of the Pope's horse on the right hand, being followed by Lewis, Duke of Bavaria of Ingolstadt, who held up the housing or horse-cloth. The Elector of Brandenburg held the reins on the left, and behind him Frederick of Austria performed the same office as Lewis of Ingolstadt. There were four other princes on both sides, who held up the horse-cloth. The Pope was followed by a gentleman on horseback, who carried an umbrella to defend him in case of need, either from the rain or sun. After him marched all the clergy and all the nobility on horseback, in such numbers, that they who were eye-witnesses reckoned up no less than forty thousand, besides the multitudes of people that followed on foot. When Martin V. came to the gate of the town, he alighted from his horse, and changed his priest's vestments for a red habit. He also took another hat, and put that which he wore upon the head of a certain prelate who is not named. Then he took horse again, as did also the emperor and the princes, who accompanied him to Gottlieben, where he embarked on the Rhine for Schaffhausen. The cardinals and the rest of his court followed him by land, and the emperor returned to Constance with the other princes." ¹⁴

Leaving Pope Martin to pursue his journey to Rome, we shall again turn our attention to Prague. Alas, the poor land of Bohemia! Woe on woe seemed coming upon it. Its two most illustrious sons had expired at the stake; the Pope had hurled excommunication against it; the emperor was collecting his forces to invade it; and the craven Wenceslaus had neither heart to feel nor spirit to resent the affront which had been done his kingdom. The citizens were distracted, for though on fire with indignation they had neither counsellor nor captain. At that crisis a remarkable man arose to organize the nation and lead its armies. His name was John Trocznowski, but he is better known by the sobriquet of Ziska - that is, the one-eyed. The circumstances attending his birth were believed to foreshadow

¹⁴Lenfant, vol. 2, pp. 275 - 278.

his extraordinary destiny. His mother went one harvest day to visit the reapers on the paternal estates, and being suddenly taken with the pains of labor, she was delivered of a son beneath an oak-tree in the field.¹⁵ The child grew to manhood, adopted the profession of arms, distinguished himself in the wars of Poland, and returning to his native country, became chamberlain to King Wenceslaus. In the palace of the jovial monarch there was little from morning to night save feasting and revelry, and Ziska, nothing loth, bore his part in all the coarse humors and boisterous sports of his master. But his life was not destined to close thus ignobly.

The shock which the martyrdom of Huss gave the whole nation was not unfelt by Ziska in the palace. The gay courtier suddenly became thoughtful. He might be seen traversing, with pensive brow and folded arms, the long corridors of the palace, the windows of which look down on the broad stream of the Moldau, on the towers of Prague, and the plains beyond, which stretch out towards that quarter of the horizon where the pile of Huss had been kindled. One day the monarch surprised him in this thoughtful mood. "What is this?" said Wenceslaus, somewhat astonished to see one with a sad countenance in his palace. "I cannot brook the insult offered to Bohemia at Constance by the murder of John Huss," replied the chamberlain. "Where is the use," said the king, "of vexing one's self about it? Neither you nor I have the means of avenging it. But," continued the king, thinking doubtless that Ziska's fit would soon pass off, "if you are able to call the emperor and Council to account, you have my permission."

"Very good, my gracious master," rejoined Ziska, "will you be pleased to give me your permission in writing?" Wenceslaus, who liked a joke, and deeming that such a document would be perfectly harmless in the hands of one who had neither friends, nor money, nor soldiers, gave Ziska what he asked under the royal seal.¹⁶

¹⁵The trunk of this oak stood till the beginning of the last century. It had wellnigh been wholly carried off by the blacksmiths of the neighborhood, who believed that a splinter taken from its trunk and attached to their hammer would give additional weight to its strokes (Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 69, foot-note.)

¹⁶Theobald, *Bell. Huss.*, cap. 28, p. 68. *Histoire de la Guerre des Hussites et du Concile de Basle*. Par Jacques Lenfant. Tom. 1, livr. 6, p. 91. Amsterdam, 1731.

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Ziska, who had accepted the authorization not in jest but in earnest, watched his opportunity. It soon came. The Pope fulminated his bull of crusade against the Hussites. There followed great excitement throughout Bohemia, and especially in its capital, Prague. ¹⁷ The burghers assembled to deliberate on the measures to be adopted for avenging the nation's insulted honour, and defending its threatened independence. Ziska, armed with the royal authorization, suddenly appeared in the midst of them. The citizens were emboldened when they saw one who stood so high, as they believed, in the favor of the king, putting himself at their head; they concluded that Wenceslaus also was with them, and would further their enterprise. In this, however, they were mistaken. The liberty accorded their proceedings they owed, not to the approbation, but to the pusillanimity of the king. The factions became more embittered every day. Tumult and massacre broke out in Prague. The senators took refuge in the town-house; they were pursued thither, thrown out at the window, and received on the pikes of the insurgents. The king, on receiving the news of the outrage, was so excited, whether from fear or anger is not known, that he had a fit of apoplexy, and died in a few days. ¹⁸

¹⁷It did not help to allay that excitement that the Pope's legate, Dominic, Cardinal of Ragusa, who had been sent to Bohemia to ascertain how matters stood, reported to his master that "the tongue and the pen were no longer of any use, and that without any more ado, it was high time to take arms against such obstinate heretics." (Lenfant, vol. 2, p. 242.)

¹⁸Lenfant, *Hist. Guer. Huss.*, tom. 1, p. 99. Krasinski, *Slavonia*, pp. 70 - 74.

Chapter 14: Commencement of the Hussite Wars

War Breaks out—Celebration in Both Kinds—First Success—The Turk—Ziska’s Appeal—Second Hussite Victory—The Emperor Besieges Prague—Repulsed—A Second Repulse—The Crown of Bohemia Refused to the Emperor—Valour of the Hussites—Influence of their Struggle on the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century

Picture: The Outrage at Prague

Picture: Celebration of the Eucharist by the Hussites in a Field near Prague

Wenceslaus being dead, and the queen espousing the side of the Catholics, the tumults burst out afresh. There was a whole week’s fighting, night and day, between the Romanists and the Hussites, on the bridge of the Moldau, leading to the royal castle. No little blood was shed; the churches and convents were pillaged, the monks driven away, and in some instances massacred. ¹ But it was likely to have fared ill with the insurgent Bohemians. The Emperor Sigismund, brother of the deceased Wenceslaus, now claimed the crown of Bohemia.. A bitter partizan of Rome, for whose sake he had incurred the eternal disgrace of burning the man to whom he had given his solemn promise of safety, was not likely to stand on scruples or fear to strike. He was marching on Prague to quell the insurrection and take possession of the crown. “Perish that crown,” said the Bohemians, “rather than it shall sit on the head of one who has incurred the double odium of tyrant and traitor.” The Bohemians resolved on resistance; and now it was that the tempest burst. But the party to strike the first blow was Sigismund.

The campaign, which lasted eighteen years, and which was signalised throughout by the passions of the combatants, the carnage of its fields, and the marvelous, we had almost said miraculous victories

¹Huss - Story of Ziska - Acts and Mon., tom. 1, p. 848.

which crowned the arms of the Hussites, owed its commencement to the following incident: -

The Hussites had agreed to meet on Michaelmas Day, 1419, on a great plain not far from Prague, and celebrate the Eucharist. On the day appointed some 40,000, it is said, from all the towns and villages around, assembled at the place of rendezvous. Three tables were set, the sacred elements were brought forth and placed upon them, and a priest officiated at each, and gave the Communion in both kinds to the people. The affair was the simplest possible; neither were the tables covered, nor did the priests wear their habits, nor had the people arms; they came as pilgrims with their walking-staves. The affair over, they made a collection to indemnify the man on whose ground they had met; and agreeing to assemble again for a like purpose before Martinmas, they separated, the most part taking the road to Prague, where they arrived at night with lighted torches. Such is the account given by an eye-witness, Benesius Horzowicki, a disciple and friend of Huss; but, says the Jesuit Balbinus, "though a heretic, his account of the affair is trustworthy."

[185] The matter got wind; and the second meeting was not allowed to pass off so quietly as the first. Several hundreds were already on their way, bearing, as before, not arms but walking-staves, when they were met by the intelligence that the troops of the emperor, lying in ambuscade, were waiting their approach. They halted on the road, and sent messengers to the towns in their rear begging assistance. A small body of soldiers was dispatched to their aid, and in the conflict which followed, the imperial cavalry, though in superior force, were put to flight. After the battle, the pilgrims with their defenders pursued their way to Prague, which they entered amid acclamations of joy. The first battle had been fought with the troops of the emperor, and the victory remained with the Bohemians.

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The Rubicon had been crossed. The Bohemians must now go forward into the heart of the conflict, which was destined to assume dimensions that were not dreamed of by either party. The Turk, without intending it, came to their help. He attacked the Empire of

²Balbinus, *Epit. Rer. Bohem.*, pp. 435, 436. Lenfant, *Hist. Guer. Huss.*, tom. 1, livr. 6, p. 93.

Sigismund on the side opposite to that of Bohemia. This divided the emperor's forces, and weakened his front against Ziska. But for this apparently fortuitous but in reality Providential occurrence, the Hussite movement might have been crushed before there was time to organize it. The prompt and patriotic Hussite leader saw his advantage, and made haste to rally the whole of Bohemia, before the emperor should have got the Moslem off his hands, and before the armed bands of Germany, now mustering in obedience to the Papal summons, should have had time to bear down upon his little country. He issued a manifesto, signed "Ziska of the Chalice," in which he invoked at once the religion and the patriotism of his countrymen. "Imitate," said he, "your ancestors the ancient Bohemians, who were always able to defend the cause of God and their own... We are collecting troops from all parts, in order to fight against the enemies of truth, and the destroyers of our nation, and I beseech you to inform your preacher that he should exhort, in his sermons, the people, to make war on the Antichrist, and that every one, old and young, should prepare himself for it. I also desire that when I shall be with you there should be no want of bread, beer, victuals, or provender, and that you should provide yourselves with good arms... Remember your first encounter, when you were few against many, unarmed against well-armed men. The hand of God has not been shortened. Have courage, and be ready. May God strengthen you! - Ziska of the Chalice: in the hope of God, Chief of the Taborites." ³

This appeal was responded to by a burst of enthusiasm. From all parts of Bohemia, from its towns and villages and rural plains, the inhabitants rallied to the standard of Ziska, now planted on Mount Tabor. These hastily assembled masses were but poorly disciplined, and still more poorly armed; but the latter defect was about to be supplied in a way they little dreamed of.

They had scarce begun their march towards the capital when they encountered a body of imperial cavalry. They routed, captured, and disarmed them. The spoils of the enemy furnished them with the weapons they so greatly needed, and they now saw themselves armed. Flushed with this second victory, Ziska, at the head of his now numerous host, a following rather than an army, entered Prague,

³Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 80; apud Lenfant.

where the righteousness of the Hussite cause, and the glory of the success that had so far attended it, were tarnished by the violence committed on their opponents. Many of the Roman Catholics lost their lives, and the number of churches and convents taken possession of, according to both Protestant and Catholic historians, was about 500. The monks were specially obnoxious from their opposition to Huss. Their establishments in Prague and throughout Bohemia were pillaged. These were of great magnificence. Aeneas Sylvius, accustomed though he was to the stately edifices of Italy, yet speaks with admiration of the number and beauty of the Bohemian monasteries. A very short while saw them utterly wrecked, and their treasure, which was immense, and which consisted in gold and silver and precious stones, went a long way to defray the expenses of the war. ⁴

That the emperor could be worsted, supported as he was by the whole forces of the Empire and the whole influence of the Church, did not enter into any man's mind. Still it began to be apparent that the Hussites were not the contemptible opponents Sigismund had taken them for. He deemed it prudent to come to terms with the Turk, that he might be at liberty to deal with Ziska.

[186] Assembling an army, contemporary historians say of 100,000 men, of various nationalities, he marched on Prague, now in possession of the Hussites, and laid siege to it. An idea may be formed of the strength of the besieging force from the rank and number of the commanders. Under the emperor, who held of course the supreme command, were five electors, two dukes, two landgraves, and more than fifty German princes. But this great host, so proudly officered, was destined to be ignominiously beaten. The citizens of Prague, under the brave Ziska, drove them with disgrace from before their walls. The imperialists avenged themselves for their defeat by the atrocities they inflicted in their retreat. Burning, rapine, and slaughter marked their track, for they fancied they saw in every Bohemian a Hussite and enemy. ⁵

A second attempt did the emperor make on Prague the same year (1420), only to subject himself and the arms of the Empire

⁴Lenfant, *Hist. Guer. Huss.*, tom. 1, p. 104. Krasinski, *Slavonia*, pp. 80, 81.

⁵Lenfant, *Hist. Guer. Huss.* tom. 1, livr. 8, pp. 129, 130.

to the disgrace of a second repulse. Outrages again marked the retreating steps of the invaders.⁶ These repeated successes invested the name of Ziska with great renown, and raised the expectations and courage of his followers to the highest pitch. It is not wonderful if their minds began to be heated, seeing as they did the armies of the Empire fleeing before them. Mount Tabor, where the standard of Ziska continued to float, was to become, so they thought, the head of the earth, more holy than Zion, more invulnerable than the Capitol. It was to be the center and throne of a universal empire, which was to bless the nations with righteous laws, and civil and religious freedom. The armies of Ziska were swelled from another and different cause. A report was spread throughout Bohemia that all the towns and villages of the country (five only excepted) were to be swallowed up by an earthquake, and this prediction obtaining general credence, the cities were forsaken, and many of their inhabitants crowded to the camp, deeming the chance of victory under so brave and fortunate a leader as Ziska very much preferable to waiting the certainty of obscure and inglorious entombment in the approaching fate of their native villages.⁷

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At this stage of the affair the Bohemians held a Diet at Czaslau (1521) to deliberate on their course for the future. The first matter that occupied them was the disposal of their crown. They declared Sigismund unworthy to wear it, and resolved to offer it to the King of Poland or to a prince of his dynasty. The second question was, on what basis should they accept a peace? The four following articles they declared indispensable in order to this, and they ever after adhered to them in all their negotiations, whether with the imperial or with the ecclesiastical authorities. These were as follow: -

1. The free preaching of the Gospel.
2. The celebration of the Sacrament of the Supper in both kinds.
3. The secularization of the ecclesiastical property, reserving only so much of it as might yield a comfortable subsistence to the clergy.
4. The execution of the laws against all crimes, by whomsoever committed, whether laics or clerics.⁸ Further, the Diet established a

⁶Ibid., pp. 133, 134.

⁷Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 82.

⁸Lenfant, Hist. Guer. Huss., tom. 1, livr. 9, pp. 161, 162.

regency for the government of the kingdom, composed of magnates, nobles, and burghers, with Ziska as its president.⁹ The Emperor Sigismund sent proposals to the Diet, offering to confirm their liberties and redress all their just wrong, provided they would accept him as their king, and threatening them with war in case of refusal. The promises and the threats of the emperor, the Diet held in equal contempt. They returned for answer an indignant rejection of his propositions, reminding Sigismund that he had broken his word in the matter of the safe-conduct, that he had inculpated himself by participating in the murder of Huss and Jerome,¹⁰ and that he had assumed the attitude of an enemy of Bohemia by publishing the bull of excommunication which the Pope had fulminated against their native land, and by stirring up the German nationalities to invade it.¹¹

The war now resumed its course. It was marked by the usual concomitants of military strife, rapine and siege, fields wasted, cities burned, and the arts and industries suspended. The conflict was interesting as terrible, the odds being so overwhelming. A little nation was seen contending single-handed against the numerous armies and various nationalities of the Empire. Such a conflict the Bohemians never could have sustained but for their faith in God, whose aid would not be wanting, they believed, to their righteous cause. Nor can any one who surveys the wonderful course of the campaign fail to see that this aid was indeed vouchsafed. Victory invariably declared on the side of the Hussites. Ziska won battle after battle, and apart from the character of the cause of which he was the champion, he may be said to have deserved the success that attended him, by the feats of valor which he performed in the field, and the consummate ability which he displayed as a general. He completely outmaneuvered the armies of the emperor; he overwhelmed them by surprises, and baffled them by new and masterly tactics. His name

⁹Ibid., p. 162.

¹⁰“Vous avez permis au grand deshonneur de notre patrie qu’on brûlat Maitre Jean Hus, qui etoit alle a Constance avec un sauf-conduit que vous lui aviez donne.” The emperor’s pledge and the public faith were equally violated, they affirm, in the case of Jerome, who went to Constance “sub simili fide, pari fide publica.” (Lenfant, *Hist. Guer. Huss.*, tom. 1, livr. 9, p. 164.)

¹¹Krasinski, *Slavonia*, pp. 83 - 85. Von Muller, *Univer. Hist.*, vol 2, p. 326.

had now become a tower of strength to his friends, and a terror to his enemies. Every day his renown extended, and in the same proportion did the confidence of his soldiers in him and in themselves increase. They forgot the odds arrayed against them, and with every new day they went forth with redoubled courage to meet their enemies in the field, and to achieve new and more glorious victories.

The cause for which they fought had a hallowing effect upon their conduct in the camp, and raised them above the fear of death. In their marches they were commonly preceded by their pastors, who bore aloft the Cup, the symbol in which they conquered. Before joining battle the Sacrament was administered in both kinds to the soldiers, and, having partaken, they went into action singing hymns. The spirit with which the Hussites contended, combining that of confessors with soldiers, was wholly new in the armies of that age. In the rear of the army came the women, who tended the sick and wounded, and in cases of necessity worked upon the ramparts.

Let us pause a moment in our tragic narration. To this day the Hussites have never had justice done them. Their cause was branded with every epithet of condemnation and abhorrence by their contemporaries. At this we do not wonder. But succeeding ages even have been slow to perceive the sublimity of their struggle, and reluctant to acknowledge the great benefits that flowed from it to Christendom. It is time to remove the odium under which it has long lain. The Hussites present the first instance in history of a nation voluntarily associating in a holy bond to maintain the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience. True, they maintained that right with the sword; but for this they were not to blame. It was not left to them to choose the weapons with which to fight their sacred battle. The fulmination of the Pope, and the invasion of their country by the armies of the emperor, left them no alternative but arms. But, having reluctantly unsheathed the sword, the Hussites used it to such good purpose that their enemies long remembered the lesson that had been taught them. Their struggle paved the way for the quiet entrance of the Reformation upon the stage of the sixteenth century. Had not the Hussites fought and bled, the men of that era would have had a harder struggle before they could have launched their great movement. Charles V. long stood with his hand upon his sword before he found courage to draw it,

remembering the terrible recoil of the Hussite war on those who had commenced it.

Chapter 15: Marvellous Genius of Ziska as a General

Blindness of Ziska—Hussite mode of Warfare—The Wagenburg—The Iron Flail—Successes—Ziska's Death—Grief of his Countrymen

Our space does not permit us to narrate in detail the many battles, in all of which Ziska bore himself so gallantly. He was one of the most remarkable generals that ever led an army. Cochlaeus, who bore him no good-will, says, that all things considered, his blindness, the peasants he had to transform into soldiers, and the odds he had to meet, Ziska was the greatest general that ever lived. Accident deprived him in his boyhood of one of his eyes. At the siege of Raby he lost the other, and was now entirely blind. But his marvelous genius for arranging an army and directing its movements, for foreseeing every emergency and coping with every difficulty, instead of being impaired by this untoward accident, seemed to be strengthened and enlarged, for it was only now that his great abilities as a military leader fully revealed themselves. When an action was about to take place, he called a few officers around him, and made them describe the nature of the ground and the position of the enemy. His arrangement was instantly made as if by intuition. He saw the course the battle must run, and the succession of maneuvers by which victory was to be grasped. While the armies were fighting in the light of day, the great chief who moved them stood apart in a pavilion of darkness. But his inner eye surveyed the whole field, and watched its every movement. That blind giant, like Samson his eyes put out, but unlike Samson his hands not bound, smote his enemies with swift, terrible, and unerring blows, and having overwhelmed them in ruin, himself retired from the field victorious. ¹

What contributed not a little to this remarkable success were the novel methods of defense which Ziska employed in the field. He

¹Lenfant, Hist. Guer. Huss., tom. 1, livr. 10, 11.

conferred on his soldiers the advantages of men who contend behind walls and ramparts, while their enemy is all the time exposed. It is a mode of warfare in use among Eastern and nomadic tribes, from whom it is probable the Poles borrowed it, and Ziska in his turn may have learned it from them when he served in their wars. It consisted in the following contrivance: - The wagons of the commissariat, linked one to another by strong iron chains, and ranged in line, were placed in front of the host. This fortification was termed a Wagenburg; ranged in the form of a circle, this wooden wall sometimes enclosed the whole army. Behind this first rampart rose a second, formed of the long wooden shields of the soldiers, stuck in the ground. These movable walls were formidable obstructions to the German cavalry. Mounted on heavy horses, and armed with pikes and battle-axes, they had to force their way through this double fortification before they could close with the Bohemians. All the while that they were hewing at the wagons, the Bohemian archers were plying them with their arrows, and it was with thinned ranks and exhausted strength that the Germans at length were able to join battle with the foe.

Even after forcing their way, with great effort and loss, through this double defense, they still found themselves at a disadvantage; for their armor scarce enabled them to contend on equal terms with the uncouth but formidable weapons of their adversaries. The Bohemians were armed with long iron flails, which they swung with prodigious force. They seldom failed to hit, and when they did so, the flail crashed through brazen helmet, skull and all. Moreover, they carried long spears which had hooks attached, and with which, clutching the German horseman, they speedily brought him to the ground and dispatched him. The invaders found that they had penetrated the double rampart of their foes only to be dragged from their horses and helplessly slaughtered. Besides numerous skirmishes and many sieges, Ziska fought sixteen pitched battles, from all of which he returned a conqueror.

The career of this remarkable man terminated suddenly. He did not fall by the sword, nor did he breathe his last on the field of

battle; he was attacked by the plague while occupied in the siege of Pysbislav, and died on October 11th, 1424.²

The grief of his soldiers was great, and for a moment they despaired of their cause, thinking that with the death of their leader all was lost. Bohemia laid her great warrior in the tomb with a sorrow more universal and profound than that with which she had ever buried any of her kings. Ziska had made the little country great; he had filled Europe with the renown of its arms; he had combated for the faith which was now that of a majority of the Bohemian nation, and by his hand God had humbled the haughtiness of that power which had sought to trample their convictions and consciences into the dust. He was buried in the Cathedral of Czaslau, in fulfillment of his own wish. His countrymen erected a monument of marble over his ashes, with his effigies sculptured on it, and an inscription recording his great qualities and the exploits he had performed. Perhaps the most touching memorial of all was his strong iron mace, which hung suspended above his tomb.³

The Bohemian Jesuit Balbinus, who had seen numerous portraits of Ziska, speaks of him as a man of middle size, strong chest, broad shoulders, large round head, and aquiline nose. He dressed in the Polish fashion, wore a mustache, and shaved his head, leaving only a tuft of brown hair, as was the manner in Poland.⁴

²It was said that on his death-bed he gave instructions to make a drum of his skin, believing that its sound would terrify the enemy. An old drum was wont to be shown at Prague as the identical one that Ziska had ordered to be made. Theobald (Bell. Huss.) rejects the story as a fable, which doubtless it is.

³A hundred years after, the Emperor Ferdinand, happening to visit this cathedral, was attracted by the sight of an enormous mace hanging above a tomb. On making inquiry whose tomb it was, and being told that it was Ziska's, and that this was his mace, he exclaimed, "Fie, fie, cette mauvaise bete!" and quitted Czaslau that night. So relates Balbinus.

⁴Lenfant, Hist, Guer. Huss., tom. 1, livr. 11, p. 212.

Chapter 16: Second Crusade Against Bohemia

Procopius Elected Leader—The War Resumed—New Invasion of Bohemia—Battle of Aussig—Total Rout and Fearful Slaughter of the Invaders—Ballad descriptive of the Battle

Picture: View in Dresden

Picture: View in Mechlin

The Hussites had lost their great leader; still the tide of success continued to flow. When dying Ziska had named Procopius as his successor, and his choice, so amply justified by its results, attests that his knowledge of men was not inferior to his skill in the field. When the Bohemians laid Ziska in the grave, they looked around with no hope of finding one equally great to fill his place. In Procopius they found a greater, though his fame has been less. Nor is this surprising. A few great qualities intensely, and it may be disproportionately developed, strike the world even more than an assemblage of gifts harmoniously blended.

[191] Procopius was the son of a nobleman of small fortune. Besides an excellent education, which his maternal uncle, who had adopted him as his heir, took care he should receive, he had traveled in many foreign countries, the Holy Land among others, and his taste had been refined, and his understanding enlarged, by what he had seen and learned abroad. On his return he entered the Church - in compliance with his uncle's solicitations, it is said, not from his own bent - and hence he was sometimes termed the Tonsured. But when the war broke out he entered with his whole heart into his country's quarrel, and, forsaking the Church, placed himself under the standard of Ziska. His devotion to the cause was not less than Ziska's. If his spirit was less fiery it was not because it was less brave, but because it was better regulated. Ziska was the soldier and general; Procopius was the statesman in addition.

The enemies of the Hussites knowing that Ziska was dead, but not knowing that his place was filled by a greater, deemed the mo-

ment opportune for striking another blow. Victory they confidently hoped would now change sides. They did not reflect that the blood of Huss and Jerome was weighing upon their swords. The terrible blind warrior, before whom they had so often fled, they would never again encounter in battle; but that righteous Power that had made Ziska its instrument in chastising the perfidy which had torn in pieces the safe-conduct of Huss, and then burned his body at the stake, they should assuredly meet on every battle-field on Bohemian soil on which they should draw sword. But this they had yet to learn, and so they resolved to resume the war, which from this hour, as they fondly believed, would run in a prosperous groove.

The new summons to arms came from Rome. The emperor, who was beginning to disrelish being continually beaten, was in no great haste to resume the campaign. To encourage and stimulate him, the Pope wrote to the princes of Germany and the King of Poland, exhorting them to unite their arms with those of Sigismund, and deal a blow which should make an end, once for all, of this troublesome affair. Than the Hussite heretics, the Turk himself, he said, was less the foe of Christianity; and it was a more urgent as well as a more meritorious work to endeavor to bring about the extirpation of the Bohemian adversary than the overthrow of the Moslem ¹ one.

This letter was speedily followed by a bull, ordaining a new crusade against the Hussites. In addition to the letter which the Pope caused to be forwarded to the King of Poland, exhorting him to extirpate the Bohemian heresy, he sent two legates to see after the execution of his wishes. He also ordered the Archbishop of Lemberg to levy in his diocese 20,000 golden ducats, to aid the king in prosecuting the war. The Pontiff wrote to the same effect to the Duke of Lithuania. There is also a bull of the same Pope, Martin V., addressed to the Archbishops of Mainz, of Treves, and of Cologne, confirming the decree of the Council of Constance against the Hussites, and the several parties into which they were divided. ²

At the first mutterings of the distant tempest, the various sections of the Hussites drew together. On the death of Ziska they had unhappily divided. There were the Taborites, who acknowledged

¹Lenfant, *Hist. Guer. Huss.*, tom. 1, livr. 11, p. 217. The Pope's letter was dated February 14th, 1424 - that is, during the sitting of the Council of Sienna.

²Lenfant, *Hist. Guer. Huss.*, tom. 1, livr. 12, p. 232.

Procopius as leader; there were the Orphans, who had lost in Ziska a father, and would accept no one in his room; and there were the Calixtines, whom Coribut, a candidate for the Bohemian crown, commanded. But the sword, now so suddenly displayed above their heads, reminded them that they had a common country and a common faith to defend. They forgot their differences in presence of the danger that now menaced them, stood side by side, and waited the coming of the foe.

The Pontiff's summons had been but too generally responded to. The army now advancing against this devoted land numbered not less than 70,000 picked men; some historians say 100,000.³ They brought with them 3,000 wagons and 180 pieces of cannon. On Saturday, June 15th, 1426, they entered Bohemia in three columns, marching in the direction of Aussig, which the Hussites were besieging, and which lies on the great plain between Dresden and Toplitz, on the confines of the Slavonic and German worlds. On Sabbath morning, as they drew near the Hussite camp, Procopius sent a proposal to the invaders that quarter should be given on both sides. The Germans, who did not expect to need quarter for themselves, refused the promise of it to the Hussites, saying that they were under the curse of the Pope, and that to spare them would be to violate their duty to the Church. "Let it be so, then," replied Procopius, "and let no quarter be given on either side."

[192] On Sabbath forenoon, the 16th of June, the battle began. The Bohemians were entrenched behind 500 wagons, fastened to one another by chains, and forming a somewhat formidable rampart. The Germans attacked with great impetuosity. They stormed the first line of defense, hewing in pieces with their battle-axes the iron fastenings of the wagons, and breaking through them. Pressing onward they threw down the second and weaker line, which consisted of the wooden shields stuck into the ground. They arrived in the area within, weary with the labor it had cost them to break through into it. The Bohemians the while were resting on their arms, and discharging an occasional shot from their swivel guns on the foe as he struggled with the wagons. Now that they were face to face with the enemy they raised their war-cry, they swung their terrible

³Ibid., 238.

flails, they plied their long hooks, and pulling the Germans from their horses, they enacted fearful slaughter upon them as they lay on the ground. Rank after rank of the invaders pressed forward, only to be blended in the terrible carnage which was going on, on this fatal spot. The battle raged till a late hour of the afternoon. The German knights contested the action with great valor and obstinacy, on a soil slippery with the blood and cumbered with the corpses of their comrades. But their bravery was in vain. The Bohemian ranks were almost untouched; the Germans were every moment going down in the fearful tempest of arrows and shot that beat upon them, and in the yet more terrible buffeting of the iron flails, which crushed the hapless warrior on whom they fell. The day closed with the total rout of the invaders, who fled from the field in confusion, and sought refuge in the mountains and woods around the scene of action. ⁴

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The fugitives when overtaken implored quarter, but themselves had settled it, before going into battle, and, accordingly, no quarter was given. Twenty-four counts and barons stuck their swords in the ground, and knelt before their captors, praying that their lives might be spared. But in vain. In one place three hundred slain knights are said to have been found lying together in a single heap. The loss in killed of the Germans, according to Palacky, whose history of Bohemia is based upon original documents, and the accuracy of which has never been called in question, was fifteen thousand. The wounded and missing may have swelled the total loss to fifty thousand, the number given in the Bohemian ballad, a part of which we are about to quote. The German nobility suffered tremendous loss, nearly all their leaders being left on the field. Of the Hussites there fell in battle thirty men.

A rich booty was reaped by the victors. All the wagons, artillery, and tents, and a large supply of provisions and coin fell into their hands. "The Pope," said the Hussites jeeringly, "owes the Germans his curse, for having enriched us heretics with such boundless store of treasure." But the main advantage of this victory was the splendid prestige it gave the Hussites. From that day their arms were looked upon as invincible.

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⁴Balbin., *Epitom. Rer. Bohem.*, p. 468. *Hist. Guer. Huss.*, tom. 1, livr. 12, pp. 238, 239.

The national poets of Bohemia celebrated in song this great triumph. The following fragment is not unlike the ballads in which some of the early conflicts of our own country were commemorated. In its mingled dialogue and description, its piquant interrogatories and stinging retorts, it bears evidence of being contemporary, or nearly so, with the battle. It is only a portion of this spirited poem for which we can here find room.

“In mind let all Bohemians bear, How God the Lord did for them care, And victory at Aussig gave, When war they waged their faith to save. The year of grace - the time to fix - Was fourteen hundred twenty-six; The Sunday after holy Vite The German host dispersed in flight. Many there were look’d on the while, Looked on Bohemia’s risk with guile, For gladsome they to see had been Bohemians suffer woe and teen. But thanks to God the Lord we raise, To God we glory give and praise, Who aided us with mighty hand To drive the German from our land. The host doth nigh Bavaria war, Crusading foes to chase afar, Foes that the Pope of Rome had sent, That all the faithful might be shent. The tale of woe all hearts doth rend, Thus to the host for aid they send: ‘Bohemia’s faith doth stand upright, If comrade comrade aids in fight.’ The Count of Meissen said in sight, ‘If the Bohemian bands unite, Evil, methinks, will us betide; Asunder let us keep them wide. Fear strikes me, when the flails I see, And those black lads so bold and free! ‘Tis said that each doth crush the foe Upon whose mail he sets a blow.’ Our Marshal, good Lord Vanek, spake: ‘Whoe’er God’s war will undertake, Whoe’er will wage it free from guile, Himself with God must reconcile.’ On Friday then, at morning light, The Czechians service held aright, Received God’s body and His blood, Ere for their faith in fight they stood. Prince Sigmund did the same likewise, And prayed to God with tearful eyes, And urged the warriors firm to stand, And cheer’d the people of the land. By Predlitz, on Behani’s height, The armies met and closed in fight;

Stout Germans there, Bohemians here, Like hungry lions, know no fear. The Germans loud proclaim’d that day, The Czechians must their creed unsay, Submit themselves and sue for grace, Or leave their lives upon the place. “Gainst us ye cannot stand,” they said, ‘Against our host ye are but dead; Look at our numbers; what are ye?

A cask of poppy-seed are we.’⁵ The bold Bohemians made reply: ‘Our creed we hold until we die, Our fatherland we will defend, Though in the fight we meet our end. And though a little band to see, A spoonful small of mustard we, Yet none the less we’ll sharply bite, If Christ but aid us in the fight. But be this pact betwixt us twain: Whoe’er’s by either army ta’en, Bind him and keep him, slay him not; Expect from us the selfsame lot.’ Said they: ‘This thing we cannot do; The Pope’s dread curse is laid on you, And we must slay in fury wild Both old and young, both maid and child.’ The Czechians too same pact did make, No German prisoners to take; Then each man call’d his God upon, And thought his faith, his honour on. The Germans jeer’d them as they stood, On came their horsemen like a flood: ‘Our foes,’ they say, ‘like geese⁶ to-day With axe, with dirk, with mace we’ll slay. Soon lose shall many a maid and wife, Sire, brother, husband in the strife, In sad bereavement shall remain; Woe waits the orphans of the slain.’ When each on other ‘gan to fall, The Czechians on their God did call; They saw before their van in view A stranger knight, whom no man knew. The Taborites begin the fight, Like men they forwards press and smite; Where’er the Orphans took their road, There streams of blood like brooklets flow’d.

And many a knight display’d his might, And many a lord was good in fight, ‘Twere vain to strive each name to say - Lord! bless them and their seed for aye! For there with valor without end They did the truth of God defend, They gave their lives right valiantly, With thee, O Lord! in heav’n to be. When long the fight had fiercely burn’d, The wind against the Germans turn’d, Their backs the bold Bohemians see, Quick to the woods and hills they flee. ???? And those that ‘scaped the bloody scene Right sadly told the Margravine, For faith and creed how fierce and wood The Czechian heretics had stood. Then fourteen counts and lords of might Did from their coursers all alight, Their sword-points deep in earth did place And to the Czechians sued for grace. For prayers and cries they cared not aught, Silver and gold they set at naught, E’en as themselves had made reply, So ev’ry man they did to die. Thus thousands fifty,

⁵A figure borrowed from the cultivation of the poppy in Bohemia.

⁶Hussi, geese, alluding to Jan Huss, John Goose.

thousands twain, Or more, were of the Germans slain, Besides the youths, that did abide In helmets by the army's side; But these they kept alive, to tell Their lady how her people fell, That all might think the fight upon, At Aussig that for God was won. Ho! all ye faithful Christian men! Each lord and knight and citizen! Follow and hold your fathers' creed And show ye are their sons indeed! Be steadfast in God's truth always, And so from God ye shall have praise; God on your offspring blessings pour, And grant you life for evermore!"

Chapter 17: Brilliant Successes of the Hussites

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Another Crusade—Bishop of Winchester its Leader—The Crusaders—Panic—Booty reaped by the Hussites—Sigismund Negotiates for the Crown—Failure of Negotiation—Hussites Invade Germany and Austria—Papal Bull—A New Crusade—Panic and Flight of the Invaders

Picture: Hussite Shield

Picture: Portrait of Procopius

Picture: Arrival of the Hussite Deputies at Basle

Scarce had this tempest passed over the Hussites when a more terrible one was seen rolling up against their devoted land. The very next year (1427) a yet greater crusade than that which had come to so inglorious an issue, was organized and set in motion. This invasion, like the former, was instigated by the Pope, who this time turned his eyes to a new quarter for a captain to lead it. He might well despair of finding a German prince willing to head such an expedition, after the woeful experience the nobles, of that land had had of Bohemian warfare. The English were at that time winning great renown in France, and why should they be unwilling, thought the Pope, to win equal fame, and at the same time to serve the Church, by turning their arms against the heretics of Bohemia? Who could tell but the warlike Norman might know how to break the spell which had hitherto chained victory to the Hussite banners, although the Teuton had not found out the important secret?

Pope Martin, following out his idea, selected Henry de Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, the son of the celebrated John of Gaunt, and brother of Henry IV., as a suitable person on whom to bestow this mark of confidence. He first created him a cardinal, he next made him his legate-a-latere, accompanying this distinguished dignity with a commission equally distinguished, and which, if difficult, would confer honour proportionately great if successfully accomplished. In short, the Pope put him at the head of a new Bohemian

crusade, which he had called into existence by his bull given at Rome, February 16th, 1427. This bull the Pope sent to Henry of Winchester, and the bishop had forthwith to provide the important additions of money, soldiers, and success. ¹

[196] The bishop, now become legate-a-latere, published in England the bull sanctioning the crusade, not doubting that he should instantly see thousands of enthusiastic warriors pressing forward to fight under his banner. He was mortified, however, to find that few Englishmen were ambitious of taking part in an enterprise beyond doubt very holy, but which beyond doubt would be very bloody. Beaufort crossed the sea to Belgium, where better fortune awaited him. In the venerable and very ecclesiastical city of Mechlin he published the Pope's bull, and waited the effect. It was all that the warlike legate-a-latere could wish. No such response had been given to any similar summons since the day that the voice of Peter the Hermit had thrilled the Western nations, and precipitated them in fanatical masses upon the infidels of Palestine. The whole of that vast region which extends from the Rhine to the Elbe, and from the shores of the Baltic to the summits of the Alps, seemed to rise up at the voice of this new Peter. Around his standard there gathered a host of motley nationalities, composed of the shepherds of the mountains, and the artisans and traders of the towns, of the peasants who tilled the fields, and the lords and princes that owned them. Contemporary writers say that the army that now assembled consisted of ninety thousand infantry and an equal number of cavalry. This doubtless is so far a guess, for in those days neither armies nor nations were accurately told, but it is without doubt that the numbers that swelled this the fourth crusade very much exceeded those of the former one. Here were swords enough surely to convert all the heretics in Bohemia.

Led by three electors of the Empire, by many princes and counts, and headed by the legate-a-latere of the Pope, this great host marched forward to the scene, as it believed, of its predestined triumph. It would strike such a blow as would redeem all past defeats, and put it out of the power of heresy ever again to lift up its head on the soil of the holy Roman Empire. The very greatness of the danger that now threatened the Hussites helped to ward it off. The patriotism of

¹Hist. Guer. Huss., tom. 1, livr. 13, p. 254. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 105.

all ranks in Bohemia, from the magnate to the peasant, was roused. Many Roman Catholics who till now had opposed their Protestant countrymen, feeling the love of country stronger in their bosom than the homage of creed, joined the standard of the great Procopius. The invaders entered Bohemia in June, 1427, and sat down before the town of Meiss which they meant to besiege.

The Bohemians marched to meet their invaders. They were now within sight of them, and the two armies were separated only by the river that flows past Meiss. The crusaders were in greatly superior force, but instead of dashing across the stream, and closing in battle with the Hussites whom they had come so far to meet, they stood gazing in silence at those warriors, whose features, hardened by constant exposure, and begrimed with the smoke and dust of battle, seemed to realize the pictures of terror which report had made familiar to their imaginations long before they came in contact with the reality. It was only for a few moments that the invaders contemplated the Hussite ranks. A sudden panic fell upon them. They turned and fled in the utmost confusion. The legate was as one who awakens from a dream. His labours and hopes at the very moment when, as he thought, they were to be crowned with victory, suddenly vanished in a shameful rout. The Hussites, plunging into the river, and climbing the opposite bank, hung upon the rear of the fugitives, slaughtering them mercilessly. The carnage was increased by the fury of the peasantry, who rose and avenged upon the foe, in his retreat, the ravages he had committed in his advance. The booty taken was so immense that there was scarcely an individual, of whatever station, in all Bohemia, who was not suddenly made rich. ²

The Pope comforted the humiliated Henry de Beaufort by sending him a letter of condolence (October 2nd, 1427), in which he hinted that a second attempt might have a better issue. But the legate, who had found that if the doctrines of the Hussites were false their swords were sharp, would meddle no further in their affairs. Not so the Emperor Sigismund. Still coveting the Bohemian crown, but despairing of gaining possession of it by arms, he now resolved to

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²Lenfant, *Hist. Guer. Huss.*, tom 1, livr. 13, p. 255. The historians of this affair have compared it to the defeat of Crassus by the Parthians, of Darius by the Scythians, and of Xerxes by the Greek

try what diplomacy could effect. But the Bohemians, who felt that the gulf between the emperor and themselves, first opened by the stake of Huss, had been vastly widened by the blood since shed in the wars into which he had forced them, declined being ruled by him. Such, at least, was the feeling of the great majority of the nation. But Procopius was unwilling to forego the hopes of peace, so greatly needed by a stricken and bleeding country. He had combated for the Bohemian liberties and the Hussite faith on the battle-field. He was ready to die for them. But he hinged, if it were possible on anything like honorable and safe terms, to close these frightful wars. In this hope he assembled the Bohemian Diet at Prague, in 1429, and got its consent to go to Vienna and lay the terms of the Bohemian people before the emperor in person.

These were substantially the same as the four articles mentioned in a former chapter, and which the Hussites, when the struggle opened, had agreed on as the indispensable basis of all negotiations for peace that might at any time be entered upon - namely, the free preaching of the Gospel, Communion in both kinds, a satisfactory arrangement of the ecclesiastical property, and the execution of the laws against all crimes by whomsoever committed. The likelihood was small that so bigoted a monarch as Sigismund would agree to these terms; but though the journey had been ten times longer, and the chance of success ten times smaller, Procopius would have done what he did if thereby he might bind up his country's wounds. It was as might have been anticipated. Sigismund would not listen to the voice of a suffering but magnanimous and pious people; and Procopius returned to Prague, his embassy unaccomplished, but with the satisfaction that he had held out the olive-branch, and that if the sword must again be unsheathed, the blood which would flow would lie at the door of those who had spurned the overtures of a just and reasonable peace.

The Hussites now assumed the offensive, and those nations which had so often carried war into Bohemia experienced its miseries on their own soil. ³ This policy might appear to the Bohemians, on a large view of their affairs, the wisest that they could pursue. We know at least that it was adopted at the recommendation of the

³Hist. Guer. Huss., tom. 1, livr. 14.

enlightened and patriotic man who guided their councils. Their overtures for peace had been haughtily rejected; and it was now manifest that they could reckon on not a day's tranquillity, save in the way of an unconditional surrender of their crown to the emperor, and an equally unconditional surrender of their conscience to the Pope. Much as they loved peace, they were not prepared to purchase it at such a price. And instead of waiting till war should come to them, they thought it better to anticipate it by carrying it into the countries of their enemies. Procopius entered Germany (1429) at the head of 80,000 warriors, and in the campaign of that and the following summers he carried his conquests from the gates of Magdeburg in the north, to the further limits of Franconia in the south. The whole of Western Germany felt the weight of his sword. Some hundred towns and castles he converted into ruins: he exacted a heavy ransom from the wealthy cities, and the barons and bishops he made to pay sums equally large as the price of their escape from captivity or death. Such towns as Bamberg and Nuremberg, and such magnates as the Elector of Brandenburg and the Bishop of Salzburg, were rated each at 10,000 ducats. This was an enormous sum at a time when the gold-yielding countries were undiscovered, and the affluence of their mines had not cheapened the price of the precious metals in the markets of Europe. The return homeward of the army of Procopius was attended by 300 wagons, which groaned under the weight of the immense booty that he carried with him on his march back to Bohemia.

We record this invasion without either justifying or condemning it. Were we to judge of it, we should feel bound to take into account the character of the age, and the circumstances of the men. The Bohemians were surrounded by nationalities who bitterly hated them, and who would not be at peace with them. They knew that their faith made them the objects of incessant intrigues. They had it in their choice, they believed, to inflict these ravages or to endure them, and seeing war there must be, they preferred that it should be abroad, not at home.

But we submit that the lasting tranquillity and the higher interests of the nation might have been more effectually secured in the long run by a policy directed to the intellectual, the moral, and especially the spiritual elevation of Bohemia. The heroism of a nation cannot

[198] be maintained apart from its moral and spiritual condition. The seat of valor is the conscience. Conscience can make of the man a coward, or it can make of him a hero. Living as the Hussites did in the continual excitement of camps and battles and victories, it could not be but that their moral and spiritual life should decline. If, confiding in that Arm which had hitherto so wonderfully guarded their land, which had given them victory on a score of battlefields, and which had twice chased their enemies from their soil when they came against them in overwhelming numbers - if, we say, leaning on that Arm, they had spread, not their swords, but their opinions over Germany, they would have taken the best of all revenges, not on the Germans only, but on Her whose seat is on the Seven Hills, and who had called up and directed against their nation all those terrible tempests that had burst, one after the other, over it. These are the invasions which Rome dreads most. It is not men clad in mail, but men clad in the armor of truth, wielding not the sword but the Scriptures, before whom Rome trembles. But we must recall our canon of criticism, and judge the Hussites by the age in which they lived.

[199] It was not their fault if the fifteenth century did not put them in possession of that clear, well-defined system of Truth, and of those great facilities for spreading it over the earth, which the nineteenth has put within our reach. Their piety and patriotism, as a principle, may have been equal, nay, superior to ours, but the ethical maxims [200] which regulate the display of these virtues were not then so fully developed. Procopius, the great leader of the Bohemians, lived in an age when missions were yet remote.

There was trembling through all Germany. Alarm was felt even at Rome, for the Hussites had made their arms the terror of all Europe. The Pope and the emperor took counsel how they might close a source of danger which threatened to devastate Christendom, and which they themselves in an evil hour had opened. They convoked a Diet at Nuremberg. There it was resolved to organize a new expedition against Bohemia. The Pope - not Martin V., who died of apoplexy on the 20th of February, 1431; but Eugenius IV., who succeeded him on the 16th of March - proclaimed through his legate, Cardinal Julian Cesarini, a fifth crusade. No ordinary advantages were held forth as inducements to embark in this most meritorious

but most hazardous service. Persons under a vow of pilgrimage to Rome, or to St. James of Compostella in Spain, might have release on condition of giving the money they would have spent on their journey to aid in the war. Nor were rewards wanting to those who, though unable to fight, were yet willing to pray. Intending crusaders might do shrift for half a Bohemian penny, nor need the penitent pay even this small sum unless he chose. Confessors were appointed to give absolution of even the most heinous crimes, such as burning churches, and murdering priests, that the crusader might go into battle with a clear conscience. And verily he had need of all these aids to fortify him, when he thought of those with whom he was about to join battle; for every Hussite was believed to have within him a legion of fiends, and it was no light matter to meet a foe like this. But whatever might happen, the safety of the crusader had been cared for. If he fell in battle, he went straight to Paradise; and if he survived, there awaited him a Paradise on earth in the booty he was sure to reap in the Bohemian land, which would make him rich for life. ⁴

Besides these spiritual lures, the feeling of exasperation was kept alive in the breasts of the Germans, by the memorials of the recent Hussite invasion still visible on the face of the country. Their ravaged fields and ruined cities continually in their sight whetted their desire for vengeance. Besides, German valor had been sorely tarnished by defeat abroad and by disaster at home, and it was not wonderful that the Teutons should seize this chance of wiping out these stains from the national escutcheon. Accordingly, every day new troops of crusaders arrived at the place of rendezvous, which was the city of Nuremberg, and the army now assembled there numbered, horse and foot, 130,000 men. ⁵

On the 1st of August, 1431, the crusaders crossed the Bohemian frontier, penetrating through the great forest which covered the country on the Bavarian side. They were brilliantly led, as concerned rank, for at their head marched quite a host of princes spiritual and temporal. Chief among these was the legate Julian Cesarini. The

⁴Coch. L., 6, pp. 136-139. Theob., cap. 71, p. 138. Bzovius, ann. 1431. Lenfant, Hist. Guer. Huss., tom. 1, livr. 15, p. 299.

⁵Hist. Guer. Huss., tom. 1, livr. 16, p. 316. Some historians reduce the number to 90,000.

very Catholic Cochlaeus hints that these cardinals and archbishops might have found worthier employment, and he even doubts whether the practice of priests appearing in mail at the head of armies can be justified by the Levites of old, who were specially exempt from serving in arms that they might wholly attend to their service in the Tabernacle. The feelings of the Hussites as day by day they received tidings of the numbers, equipments, and near approach of the host, we can well imagine. Clouds as terrible had ere this darkened their sky, but they had seen an omnipotent Hand suddenly disperse them. They were prepared, as aforetime, to stand shoulder to shoulder in defense of their country and their faith, but any army they could hope to bring into the field would not amount to half the number of that which was now marching against them. They reflected, however, that victory did not always declare on the side of the largest battalions, and, lifting their eyes to heaven, they calmly awaited the approach of the foe. The invading host advanced, "chanting triumph before victory," says Lenfant, and arriving at Tachau, it halted there a week. Nothing could have better suited the Bohemians. Forming into three columns the invaders moved forward. Procopius fell back on their approach, sowing reports as he retreated that the Bohemians had quarreled among themselves, and were fleeing. His design was to lure the enemy farther into the country, and fall upon him on all sides. On the morning of the 14th August the Bohemians marched to meet the foe. That foe now became aware of the stratagem which had been practiced upon him. The terrible Hussite soldiers, who were believed to be in flight, were advancing to offer battle.

[201] The enemy were encamped near the town of Reisenberg. The Hussites were not yet in sight, but the sounds of their approach struck upon the ear of the Germans. The rumble of their wagons, and their war-hymn chanted by the whole army as it marched bravely forward to battle, were distinctly heard. Cardinal Cesarini and a companion climbed a little hill to view the impending conflict. Beneath them was the host which they expected soon to see engaged in victorious fight. It was an imposing spectacle, this great army of many nationalities, with its waving banners, its mail-clad knights, its helmeted cavalry, its long lines of wagons, and its numerous artillery. The cardinal and his friend had gazed only a few minutes when they were startled by a strange and sudden movement in the host. As if

smitten by some invisible power, it appeared all at once to break up and scatter. The soldiers threw away their armor and fled, one this way, another that; and the wagoners, emptying their vehicles of their load, set off across the plain at full gallop. Struck with consternation and amazement, the cardinal hurried down to the field, and soon learned the cause of the catastrophe. The army had been seized with a mysterious panic. That panic extended to the officers equally with the soldiers. The Duke of Bavaria was one of the first to flee. He left behind him his carriage, in the hope that its spoil might tempt the enemy and delay their pursuit. Behind him, also in inglorious flight, came the Elector of Brandenburg; and following close on the elector were others of less note, chased from the field by this unseen terror. The army followed, if that could be styled an army which so lately had been a marshaled and bannered host but was now only a rabble rout, fleeing when no man pursued.

To do him justice, the only man who did not lose his head that day was the Papal legate Cesarini. Amazed, mortified, and indignant, he took his stand in the path of the crowd of fugitives, in the hope of compelling them to stand and show fight. He addressed them with the spirit of a soldier, bidding them remember the glory of their ancestors. If their pagan forefathers had shown such courage in fighting for dumb idols, surely it became their descendants to show at least equal courage in fighting for Christ, and the salvation of souls. But deeming, it may be, this style of argument too high-pitched for the men and the occasion, the cardinal pressed upon the terrified crowd the more prudential and practical consideration, that they had a better chance of saving their lives by standing and fighting than by running away; that they were sure to be overtaken by the light cavalry of the Bohemians, and that the peasantry, whose anger they had incurred by the pillage and slaughter they had inflicted in their advance, would rise upon them and cut them down in their flight. With these words he succeeded in rallying some bodies of the fugitives. But it was only for a few minutes. They stood their ground only till the Bohemians were within a short distance of them, and then that strange terror again fell upon them, and the stampede (to use a modern phrase) became so perfectly uncontrollable, that the legate himself was borne away in the current of bewildered and hurrying men. Much did the cardinal leave behind him in his enforced flight.

First and chiefly, he lost that great anticipated triumph of which he had been so sure. His experience in this respect was precisely that of another cardinal-legate, his predecessor, Henry de Beaufort. It was a rude awakening, in which he opened his eyes, not on glorious victory, but on humiliating and bitter defeat. Cesarini incurred other losses on this fatal field. He left behind him his hat, his cross, his bell, and the Pope's bull proclaiming the crusade - that same crusade which had come to so ridiculous a termination. The booty was immense. Wagon-loads of coin, destined for the payment of the troops, became now the property of the Bohemians, besides the multifarious spoil of the field - artillery, arms, banners, dresses, gold and silver plate, and utensils of all kinds; and, adds an old chronicler, with a touch of humor, "many wagons of excellent wine."⁶

This was now the second time the strange phenomenon of panic had been repeated in the Hussite wars. The Germans are naturally brave; they have proved their valor on a hundred fields. They advanced against the Bohemians in vastly superior numbers; and if panic there was to be, we should rather have looked for it in the little Hussite army. When they saw the horizon filled with German foot and horse, it would not have been surprising if the Bohemians had turned and fled. But that the Germans should flee is explicable only with reference to the moral state of the combatants. It shows that a good conscience is the best equipment of an army, and will do much to win victory. But there is something more in the facts we have related than the courage inspired by the consciousness of a good cause, and the feebleness and cowardice engendered by the consciousness of a bad one. There is here the touch of a Divine finger - the infusion of a preternatural terror. So great was the stupefaction with which the crusaders were smitten that many of them, instead of continuing their flight into their own country, wandered back into Bohemia; while others of them, who reached their homes in Nuremberg, did not know their native city when they entered it, and began to beg for lodgings as if they were among strangers.

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⁶Aeneas Sylvius, cap. 48. Theob., cap. 76. Lenfant, Hist. Guer. Huss., tom. 1, livr. 16, pp. 315 - 320.

Chapter 18: The Council of Basle

Negotiations—Council of Basle—Hussites Invited to the Council—Entrance of Hussite Deputies into Basle—Their Four Articles—Debates in the Council—No Agreement—Return of the Deputies to Prague—Resumption of Negotiations—The Compactata—Its Equivocal Character—Sigismund accepted as King

Picture: Seal of the Council of Basle

Picture: Cathedral of Basle

Picture: Aeneas Sylvius (Pope Pius II.), John Ziska, George Podiebrad, Archbishop Ročyzana

Arms, which had served the cause of Rome so ill, were now laid aside, and in their room resort was had to wiles. ¹ It was now evident that those great armaments, raised and fitted out at an expense so enormous, and one after another launched against Bohemia - a little country, but peopled by heroes - were accomplishing no end at all, save that of fattening with corpses and enriching with booty the land they were meant to subdue. There were other considerations which recommended a change of policy on the part of the imperial and ecclesiastical powers. The victorious Hussites were carrying the war into the enemy's country. They had driven the Austrian soldiers out of Moravia. They had invaded Hungary and other provinces, burning towns and carrying off booty. These proceedings were not without their effect in opening the eyes of the Pope and the emperor to the virtue of conciliation, to which till now they had been blind. In the year 1432, they addressed letters to the Bohemians, couched in the most friendly terms, and evidently designed to open the way to peace, and to give the emperor quiet possession of the kingdom in which, as he said, he was born, and over which his father, brother,

¹So says Comenius: "Caesar igitur cum pontifice ut armis nihil profici animadvertunt ad fraudes conversi Basilea convocato iterum (anno 1432) concilio." (Persecut. Eccles. Bohem., p. 53.)

and uncle had reigned. Not otherwise than as they had reigned would he reign over them, should they permit him peaceably to enter. So he promised.

A General Council of the Church had been convoked, and was now in session at Basle. On the frontier between Germany and Switzerland, washed by the Rhine, skirted on the east by the hills of the Black Forest, while in the southern horizon appear the summits of the Jura Alps, is situated the pleasant town where the Council was now assembled, and where a century later the seeds of the Reformation found a congenial soil. Letters from the emperor and the legate Julian invited the Bohemians to come to Basle and confer on their points of difference.² To induce them to accept this invitation, the Fathers offered them a safe-conduct to and from the Council, and a guarantee for the free celebration of their worship during their stay, adding the further assurance that the Council “would lovingly and gently hear their reasons.”³

The Hussites were not at all sanguine that the result of the conference would be such as would enable them to sheathe the sword over a satisfactory arrangement of their affairs. They had doubts, too, touching their personal safety. Still the matter was worth a good deal of both labor and risk; and after deliberating, they resolved to give proof of their desire for peace by attending the Council. They chose deputies to represent them at Basle, of whom the chief were Procopius “the Great,” William Rosca, Baron of Poscupicz, a valiant knight; John Rochyzana, preacher of Prague; and Nicolas Galecus, pastor of the Taborites.⁴ They were accompanied by Peter Payne, an Englishman, “of excellent prompt and pregnant wit,” says Fox; and who did good service at Basle.⁵ A company of 300 in all set out on horseback for the Council.

²Concil. Basil. - Hard., tom. 8, pp. 1313 and 1472 - 1494. Lenfant, *Hist. des Huss.*, tom. 1, pp. 322 - 324 and 330 - 334.

³Concil. Basil - Hard., tom.8, p. 1472. Fox, vol. 1, 862.

⁴Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 53.

⁵Payne had been Principal of Edmund's Hall, Oxford. He enjoyed a high repute among the Bohemians. Lenfant says he was a man of deep learning, and devoted himself to the diffusion of Wicliffe's opinions, and the elucidation of obscure passages in his writings. Cochlaeus speaks of him as “adding his own pestiferous tracts to Wicliffe's books, and with inferior art, but more intense venom, corrupting the purity of Bohemia.” (Krasinski, p. 87.)

The arrival of the Bohemian deputies was looked forward to with much interest in the Swiss town. The prodigies recently enacted upon its soil had made Bohemia a land of wonders, and very extraordinary pictures indeed had been circulated of the men by whom the victories with which all Europe was now ringing had been won. The inhabitants of Basle waited their arrival half in expectation, half in terror, not knowing whether they were heroes or monsters whom they were about to receive into their city. At length their approach was announced. All the inhabitants of Basle turned out to see those men whose tenets were so abominable, and whose arms were so terrible. The streets were lined with spectators; every window and roof had its cluster of eager and anxious sight-seers; and even the venerable Fathers of the Council mingled in the crowd, that they might have an early view of the men whom they were to meet in theological battle. As the cavalcade crossed the long wooden bridge that spans the Rhine, and slowly climbed the opposite bank, which is crowned with the cathedral towers and other buildings of the city, its appearance was very imposing. The spectators missed the “teeth of lions and eyes of demons” with which the Hussites were credited by those who had fled before them on the battle-field; but they saw in them other qualities which, though less rare, were more worthy of admiration. Their tall figures and gallant bearing, their faces scarred with battle, and their eyes lit with courage, were the subject of general comment. Procopius drew all eyes upon him. “This is the man,” said they one to another, “who has so often put to flight the armies of the faithful - who has destroyed so many cities - who has massacred so many thousands; the invincible - the valiant.”⁶

The deputies had received their instructions before leaving Prague. They were to insist on the four following points (which, as already mentioned, formed the pre-arranged basis on which alone the question of a satisfactory adjustment of affairs could be considered) as the indispensable conditions of peace: - I. The free preaching of the Word. II. The right of the laity to the Cup, and the use of the vernacular tongue in all parts of Divine worship. III. The ineligibility of the clergy to secular office and rule. IV. The execution

⁶Aeneas Sylvius (who was an eye-witness), *Hist. Bohem.*, cap. 49. Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, vol. 1, pp. 862, 863.

of the laws in the case of all crimes, without respect of persons.⁷ Accordingly, when the deputies appeared before the Council, they made the Fathers aware that their deliberations must be confined to these four points; that these were the faith of the Bohemian nation; that that nation had not empowered them to entertain the question of a renunciation of that faith, but only to ascertain how far it might be possible, in conformity with the four articles specified, to arrange a basis of peace with the Church of Rome, and permit a Roman Catholic sovereign to wear the crown of Bohemia, and that they had appeared in the Council not to discuss with it generally the tenets of Huss and Jerome.⁸

These four articles may be said to have formed the new constitution of the kingdom of Bohemia. They struck at the foundation of the Roman hierarchy, and implied a large measure of reformation. The eventual consolidation of the nation's civil and religious liberties would have been their inevitable result. The supreme authority of the Scriptures, which the Hussites maintained, implied the emancipation of the conscience, the beginning of all liberty. The preaching of the Gospel and the celebration of public worship in the language of the people, implied the purification of the nation's morals and the enlightenment of the national intellect. Communion in both kinds was a practical repudiation of the doctrine of the mass; for to insist on the Cup as essential to the Sacrament is tacitly to maintain that the bread is simply bread, and not the literal flesh of Christ. And the articles which disqualified priests from civil rule, displaced them from the state offices which they filled, and subjected them to the laws in common with others. This article struck at the idea that the

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⁷Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 54. These are nearly the same articles which the Protestants demanded in 1551 from the Council of Trent. (Sleidan, lib. 23.)

⁸“It was an unheard-of occurrence in the Church,” says Lechler, “that a General Council should take part in a discussion with a whole nation that demanded ecclesiastical reform, receive its deputies as the ambassadors of an equal power, and give them liberty of speech. This extraordinary event lent to the idea of reform a consideration, and gave it an honor, which involuntarily worked deeper than all that heretofore had been thought, spoken, and treated of respecting Church reform. Even the journey of the ambassadors through the German provinces, where they were treated with kindness and honor, still more the public discussion in Basle, as well as the private intercourse of the Hussites with many of the principal members of the Council, were of lasting importance.” (Vol. 2, p. 479.)

priesthood forms a distinct and theocratic kingdom. The four articles as they stand, it will be observed, lie within the sphere of administration; they do not include any one principle fundamentally subversive of the whole scheme of Romanism. In this respect, they fall short of Wicliffe's programme, which preceded them, as well as of Luther's which came after. In Bohemia, the spiritual and intellectual forces are less powerfully developed; the patriotic and the military are in the ascendant. Still, it is to be borne in mind that the Bohemians had acknowledged the great principle that the Bible is the only infallible authority, and where this principle is maintained and practically carried out, there the fabric of Romanism is undermined. Put the priest out of court as an infallible oracle, and the Bible comes in his room; and the moment the Word of God enters, the shackles of human authority and tradition fall off.

Cardinal Julian, the Papal legate, opened the proceedings with a long and eloquent oration of a conciliatory character. He exhorted the delegates from Bohemia, says Fox, to unity and peace, saying that "the Church was the spouse of Jesus Christ, and the mother of all the faithful; that it hath the keys of binding and loosing, and also that it is white and fair, and without spot or wrinkle, and that it cannot err in those points necessary to salvation. He exhorted them also to receive the decrees of the Council, and to give no less credit unto the Council than unto the Gospel, by whose authority the Scriptures themselves are received and allowed. Also, that the Bohemians, who call themselves the children of the Church, ought to hear the voice of their mother, who is never unmindful of her children... that in the time of Noah's flood as many as were without the ark perished; that the Lord's passover was to be eaten in one house; that there is no salvation to be sought for out of the Church, and that this is the famous garden and fountain of water, whereof whosoever shall drink shall not thirst everlastingly; that the Bohemians have done as they ought, in that they have sought the fountains of this water at the Council, and have now at length determined to give ear unto their mother."⁹

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The Bohemians made a brief reply, saying that they neither believed nor taught anything that was not founded on the Word of

⁹Lenfant, *Hist. Conc. Basle*, tom. 2, livr. 17, p. 2; Amsterdam, 1731.

God; that they had come to the Council to vindicate their innocence in open audience, and ended by laying on the table the four articles they had been instructed to insist on as the basis of peace. ¹⁰

Each of these four articles became in its turn the subject of discussion. Certain of the members of Council were selected to impugn, and certain of the Bohemian delegates were appointed to defend them. ¹¹ The Fathers strove, not without success, to draw the deputies into a discussion on the wide subject of Catholicism. They anticipated, it may be, an easy victory over men whose lives had been passed on the battle-field; for if the Hussites were foiled in the general argument, they might be expected to yield more easily on the four points specially in debate. But neither on the wider field of Catholicism or on the narrower ground of the four articles did the Bohemians show any inclination to yield. Wherever they had learned their theology, they proved themselves as obstinate combatants in the council-chamber as they had done on the field of battle; they could marshal arguments and proofs as well as soldiers, and the Fathers soon found that Rome was likely to win as little fame in this spiritual contest as she had done in her military campaigns. The debates dragged on through three tedious months; and at the close of that period the Council was as far from yielding the Hussite articles, and the delegates were as far from being convinced that they ought to refrain from urging them, as they had been on the first day of the debate. This was not a little mortifying to the Fathers; all the more so that it was the reverse of what they had confidently anticipated. The Hussites, they thought, might cling to their errors in the darkness that brooded over the Bohemian soil; but at Basle, in the presence of the polemical giants of Rome, and amidst the blaze of an Ecumenical Council, that they should continue to maintain them was not less a marvel than a mortification to the Council. Procopius especially bore himself gallantly in this debate. A scholar and a theologian, as well as a warrior, the Fathers saw with mingled admiration and chagrin that he could wield his logic with not less dexterity than his sword, and could strike as heavy a blow on the ecclesiastical arena as on the military. “You hold a great many heresies,” said the Papal legate to

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 2, 3.

¹¹Ibid., p. 4.

him one day. “For example, you believe that the Mendicant orders are an invention of the devil.” If Procopius grant this, doubtless thought the legate, he will mortally offend the Council; and if he deny it, he will scandalize his own nation. The legate waited to see on which horn the leader of the Taborites would do penance. “Can you show,” replied Procopius, “that the Mendicants were instituted by either the patriarchs or the prophets under the Old Testament, or Jesus Christ and the apostles under the New? If not, I ask you, by whom were they instituted?” We do not read that the legate pressed the charge further. ¹²

After three months’ fruitless debates, the Bohemian delegates left Basle and returned to their own country. The Council would come to no terms unless the Bohemians would engage to surrender the faith of Huss, and submit unconditionally to Rome. Although the Hussites, vanquished and in fetters, had been prostrate at the feet of the Council, it could have proposed nothing more humiliating. The Council forgot that the Bohemians were victorious, and that it was it that was suing for peace. In this light, it would seem, did the matter appear to the members when the deputies were gone, for they sent after them a proposal to renew at Prague the negotiations which had been broken off at Basle. ¹³

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Shrinking from the dire necessity of again unsheathing the sword, and anxious to spare their country the calamities that attend even victorious warfare, the Bohemian chiefs returned answer to the Council bidding them send forward their delegates to Prague. Many an armed embassy had come to Prague, or as near to it as the valor of its heroic sons would permit; now messengers of peace were traveling toward the land of John Huss. Let us, said the Bohemians, display as great courtesy and respect on this occasion as we have shown bravery and defiance on former ones. The citizens put on

¹²Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 54. Lenfant, *Hist. Conc. Basle.*, tom. 2, livr. 17, p. 4. It is interesting to observe that the legate Julian, president of the Council, condemns among others the three following articles of Wicliffe: - 1. That the substance of bread and wine remains after consecration. 2. That the accidents cannot subsist without the substance. 3. That Christ is not really and corporeally present in the Sacrament. This shows conclusively what in the judgment of the legate was the teaching of Wicliffe on the Eucharist. (Lenfant, *Hist. Conc. Basle*, tom. 2, livr. 17, p. 6.)

¹³Lenfant, *Hist. Conc. Basle*, tom. 2, livr. 17, p. 14.

their best clothes, the bells were tolled, flags were suspended from the steeples and ramparts and gates, and every expression of public welcome greeted the arrival of the delegates of the Council.

The Diet of Bohemia was convoked (1434) ¹⁴ with reference to the question which was about to be reopened. The negotiations proceeded more smoothly on the banks of the Moldau than they had done on those of the Rhine. The negotiations ended in a compromise. It was agreed that the four articles of the Hussites should be accepted, but that the right of explaining them, that is of determining their precise import, should belong to the Council - in other words, to the Pope and the emperor. Such was the treaty now formed between the Roman Catholics and the Hussites; its basis was the four articles, explained by the Council - obviously an arrangement which promised a plentiful crop of misunderstandings and quarrels in the future. To this agreement was given the name of the *Compactata*. As with the Bible so with the four Hussite articles - Rome accepted them, but reserved to herself the right of determining their true sense. It might have been foreseen that the Interpretation and not the Articles would henceforth be the rule. So was the matter understood by Aeneas Sylvius, an excellent judge of what the Council meant. "This formula of the Council," said he, "is short, but there is more in its meaning than in its words. It banishes all such opinions and ceremonies as are alien to the faith, and it takes the Bohemians bound to believe and to maintain all that the Church Catholic believes and maintains." ¹⁵ This was said with special reference to the Council's explication of the Hussite article of Communion in both kinds. The administrator was to teach the recipient of the Eucharist, according to the decree of the Council in its thirtieth session, that a whole Christ was in the cup as well as in the bread. This was a covert reintroduction of transubstantiation.

The *Compactata*, then, was but a feeble guarantee of the Bohemian faith and liberties; in fact, it was a surrender of both; and thus the Pope and the emperor, defeated on so many bloody fields, triumphed at last on that of diplomacy. Many of the Bohemians, and more especially the party termed the Calixtines, now returned to

¹⁴Ibid., tom. 2, livr. 17, pp. 14 - 18.

¹⁵Aeneas Sylvius, *Hist. Bohem.*, cap. 52. Lenfant, *Hist. Conc. Basle*, tom. 2, livr. 17, pp. 14 and 69, 70.

their obedience to the Roman See, the cup being guaranteed to them, and the Emperor Sigismund was now acknowledged as legitimate sovereign of Bohemia. ¹⁶

¹⁶Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, pp. 54, 55. Krasinski, *Slavonia*, pp. 120, 121.

Chapter 19: Last Scenes of the Bohemian Reformation

The Two Parties, Calixtines and Taborites—The Compactata Accepted by the First, Rejected by the Second—War between the Two—Death of Procopius—Would the Bohemian Reformation have Regenerated Christendom?—Sigismund Violates the Compactata—He Dies—His Character—George Podiebrad—Elected King—The Taborites—Visited by Aeneas Sylvius—Their Persecutions—A Taborite Ordination—Multiplication of their Congregations

Picture: Taborites Selecting a Pastor

Picture: Taborites Worshipping in a Cave

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The Bohemians were now divided into two strongly marked and widely separated parties, the Taborites and the Calixtines. This division had existed from the first; but it widened in proportion as the strain of their great struggle was relaxed. The party that retained most of the spirit of John Huss were the Taborites. With them the defense of their religion was the first concern, that of their civil rights and privileges the second. The latter they deemed perfectly safe under the aegis of the former. The Calixtines, on the other hand, had become lukewarm so far as the struggle was one for religion. They thought that the rent between their country and Rome was unnecessarily wide, and their policy was now one of approximation. They had secured the cup, as they believed, not reflecting that they had got transubstantiation along with it; and now the conflict, they thought, should cease. To the party of the Calixtines belonged the chief magnates, and most of the great cities, which threw the preponderance of opinion on the side of the Compactata. Into this scale was thrown also the influence of Rochyzana, the pastor of the Calixtines. “He was tempted with the hope of a bishopric,” says Comenius, and used his influence both at Basle and Prague to further conciliation on terms more advantageous to Rome than honorable

to the Bohemians. "In this manner," says Comenius, "they receded from the footsteps of Huss and returned to the camp of Antichrist."¹

In judging of the conduct of the Bohemians at this crisis of their affairs, we are to bear in mind that the events narrated took place in the fifteenth century; that the points of difference between the two Churches, so perfectly irreconcilable, had not yet been so clearly and sharply defined as they came to be by the great controversies of the century that followed. But the Bohemians in accepting this settlement stepped down from a position of unexampled grandeur. Their campaigns are amongst the most heroic and brilliant of the wars of the world. A little country and a little army, they nevertheless were at this hour triumphant over all the resources of Rome and all the armies of the Empire. They had but to keep their ground and remain united, and take care that their patriotism, kindled at the altar, did not decline, and there was no power in Europe that would have dared attack them. From the day that the Bohemian nation sat down on the Compactata, their prestige waned, they gained no more victories; and the tone of public feeling, and the tide of national prosperity, began to go back.

The Calixtines accepted, the Taborites rejected this arrangement. The consequence was the deplorable one of an appeal to arms by the two parties. Formerly, they had never unsheathed the sword except against a common enemy, and to add new glory to the glory already acquired; but now, alas! divided by that power whose wiles have ever been a hundred times more formidable than her arms, Bohemia unsheathed the sword against Bohemia. The Calixtines were by much the larger party, including as they did not only the majority of those who had been dissentients from Rome, but also all the Roman Catholics. The Taborites remained under the command of Procopius, who, although most desirous of composing the strife and letting his country have rest, would not accept of peace on terms which he held to be fatal to his nation's faith and liberty. Bohemia, he clearly saw, had entered on the descending path. Greater concessions and deeper humiliations were before it. The enemy before whom she had begun to humble herself would not be satisfied till he had reft from her all she had won on the victorious field. Rather than witness this

¹Comenius, *Persecut. Eccles. Bohem.*, pp. 54, 55.

humiliation, Procopius betook himself once more to the field at the head of his armed Taborites.

Bloody skirmishes marked the opening of the conflict. At last, the two armies met on the plain of Lipan, twelve English miles from Prague, the 29th of May, 1434, and a great battle was fought. The day, fiercely contested on both sides, was going in favor of Procopius, when the general of his cavalry rode off the field with all under his command.² This decided the action. Procopius, gathering round him the bravest of his soldiers, rushed into the thick of the foe, where he contended for awhile against fearful odds, but at last sank overpowered by numbers. With the fall of Procopius came the end of the Hussite wars.

A consummate general, a skillful theologian, an accomplished scholar, and an incorruptible patriot, Procopius had upheld the cause of Bohemia so long as Bohemia was true to itself, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini said of him that "he fell weary with conquering rather than conquered."³ His death fulfilled the saying of the Emperor Sigismund, "that the Bohemians could be overcome only by Bohemians." With him fell the cause of the Hussites. No effectual stand could the Taborites make after the loss of their great leader; and as regards the Calixtines, they riveted their chains by the same blow that struck down Procopius. Yet one hardly can wish that this great patriot had lived longer. The heroic days of Bohemia were numbered, and the evil days had come in which Procopius could take no pleasure. He had seen the Bohemians united and victorious. He had seen puissant kings and mighty armies fleeing before them. He had seen their arts, their literature, their husbandry, all flourishing. For the intellectual energy evoked by the war did not expend itself in the camp; it overflowed, and nourished every interest of the nation. The University of Prague continued open, and its classrooms crowded, all throughout that stormy period. The common schools of the country were equally active, and education was universally diffused. Aeneas Sylvius says that every woman among the Taborites was well acquainted with the Old and New Testaments, and unwilling as he was to see any good in the Hussites, he yet confesses that they had one

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²Lenfant, *Hist. Conc. Basle*, tom. 2, livr. 17, pp. 19, 20. Bonnechose, vol. 2, p. 328.

³Aeneas Sylvius, *Hist. Bohem.*, p. 114.

merit - namely, "the love of letters." It was not uncommon at that era to find tracts written by artizans, discussing religious subjects, and characterized by the elegance of their diction and the rigor of their thinking.⁴ All this Procopius had seen. But now Bohemia herself had dug the grave of her liberties in the Compactata. And when all that had made Bohemia dear to Procopius was about to be laid in the sepulcher, it was fitting that he too should be consigned to the tomb.

One is compelled to ask what would the result have been, had the Bohemians maintained their ground? Would the Hussite Reformation have regenerated Christendom? We are disposed to say that it would not. It had in it no principle of sufficient power to move the conscience of mankind. The Bohemian Reformation had respect mainly to the corruptions of the Church of Rome - not those of doctrine, but those of administration. If the removal of these could have been effected, the Bohemians would have been content to accept Rome as a true and apostolic Church. The Lutheran Reformation, on the other hand, had a first and main respect to the principle of corruption in the individual man. This awoke the conscience. "How shall I, a lost sinner, obtain pardon and life eternal?" This was the first question in the Reformation of Luther. It was because Rome could not lift off the burden from the conscience, and not simply because her administration was tyrannical and her clergy scandalous, that men were constrained to abandon her. It was a matter of life and death with them. They must flee from a society where, if they remained, they saw they should perish everlastingly. Had Huss and Jerome lived, the Bohemian Reformation might have worked itself into a deeper groove; but their death destroyed this hope: there arose after them no one of equally commanding talents and piety; and the Bohemian movement, instead of striking its roots deeper, came more and more to the surface. Its success, in fact, might have been a misfortune to Christendom, inasmuch as, by giving it a reformed Romanism, it would have delayed for some centuries the advent of a purer movement.

The death of Procopius, as we have already mentioned, considerably altered the position of affairs. With him died a large part of that

⁴Aeneas Sylvius: "Nam perfidium genus illud hominum hoc solum boni habet, quod litteras amat." (Letter to Carvajal.) Krasinski, Slavonia, pp. 124 - 126.

energy and vitality which had invariably sustained the Bohemians in their resolute struggles with their military and ecclesiastical enemies; and, this being so, the cause gradually pined away.

The Emperor Sigismund was now permitted to mount the throne of Bohemia, but not till he had sworn to observe the Compactata, and maintain the liberties of the nation (July 12th, 1436). A feeble guarantee! The Bohemians could hardly expect that the man who had broken his pledge to Huss would fulfill his stipulations to them. "In striking this bargain with the heretics," says Aeneas Sylvius, "the emperor yielded to necessity, being desirous at any price of gaining the crown, that he might bring back his subjects to the true Church."⁵ And so it turned out, for no sooner did the emperor feel himself firm in his seat than, forgetful of the Compactata, and his oath to observe it, he proceeded to restore the dominancy of the Church of Rome in Bohemia.⁶ This open treachery provoked a storm of indignation; the country was on the brink of war, and this calamity was averted only by the death of the emperor in 1437, within little more than a year after being acknowledged as king by the Bohemians.⁷

[210] Born to empire, not devoid of natural parts, and endowed with not a few good qualities, Sigismund might have lived happily and reigned gloriously. But all his gifts were marred by a narrow bigotry which laid him at the feet of the priesthood. The stake of Huss cost him a twenty years' war. He wore out life in labours and perils; he never knew repose, he never tasted victory. He attempted much, but succeeded in nothing. He subdued rebellion by subtle arts and deceitful promises; content to win a momentary advantage at the cost of incurring a lasting disgrace. His grandfather, Henry VII., had exalted the fortunes of his house and the splendor of the Empire by opposing the Papal See; Sigismund lowered both by becoming its tool. His misfortunes thickened as his years advanced. He escaped a tragical end by a somewhat sudden death. No grateful nation mourned around his grave.

There followed some chequered years. The first rent in Bohemian unity, the result of declension from the first rigor of the Bohemian faith, was never healed. The Calixtines soon began to dis-

⁵Aeneas Sylvius, *Hist. Bohem.*, p. 120.

⁶Krasinski, *Slavonia*, p. 135. *Bonnechese*, vol. 2, p. 330.

⁷Lenfant, *Hist Conc. Basle*, tom. 2, p. 63.

cover that the Compactata was a delusion, and that it existed only on paper. Their monarchs refused to govern according to its provisions. To plead it as the charter of their rights was only to expose themselves to contempt. The Council of Basle no doubt had appended its seal to it, but the Pope refused to look at it, and ultimately annulled it. At length, during the minority of King Vladislav, George Podiebrad, a Bohemian nobleman, and head of the Calixtines, became regent of the kingdom, and by his great talents and upright administration gave a breathing-space to his distracted nation. On the death of the young monarch, Podiebrad was elected king. He now strove to make the Compactata a reality, and revive the extinct rights and bring back the vanished prestige of Bohemia; but he found that the hour of opportunity had passed, and that the difficulties of the situation were greater than his strength could overcome. He fondly hoped that Aeneas Sylvius, who had now assumed the tiara under the title of Pius II., would be more compliant in the matter of the Compactata than his predecessor had been. As secretary to the Council of Basle, Aeneas Sylvius had drafted this document; and Podiebrad believed that, as a matter of course, he would ratify as Pope what he had composed as secretary. He was doomed to disappointment. Pius II. repudiated his own handiwork, and launched excommunication against Podiebrad (1463)⁸ for attempting to govern on its principles. Aeneas' successor in the Papal chair, Paul II., walked in his steps. He denounced the Compactata anew; anathematized Podiebrad as an excommunicated heretic, whose reign could only be destructive to mankind, and published a crusade against him. In pursuance of the Papal bull a foreign army entered Bohemia, and it became again the theater of battles, sieges, and great bloodshed.

Podiebrad drove out the invaders, but he was not able to restore the internal peace of his nation. The monks had returned, and priestly machinations were continually fomenting party animosities. He

⁸A wit of the time remarked, "Pius damnavit quod Aeneas amavit" - that is, Pius damned what Aeneas loved. Platina, the historian of the Popes, holds up Aeneas (Pius II.) as a memorable example of the power of the Papal chair to work a change for the worse on those who have the fortune or the calamity to occupy it. As secretary to the Council of Basle, Aeneas stoutly maintained the doctrine that a General Council is above the Pope; when he came to be Pius II., he as stoutly maintained that the Pope is superior to a General Council

retained possession of the throne; but his efforts were crippled, his life was threatened, and his reign continued to be full of distractions till its very close, in 1471. ⁹ The remaining years of the century were passed in similar troubles, and after this the history of Bohemia merges in the general stream of the Reformation.

[211] We turn for a few moments to the other branch of the Bohemian
[212] nation, the Taborites. They received from Sigismund, when he ascended the throne, that lenient treatment which a conqueror rarely denies to an enemy whom he despises. He gave them the city of Tabor, ¹⁰ with certain lands around, permitting them the free exercise of their worship within their allotted territory, exacting in return only a small tribute. Here they practiced the arts and displayed the virtues of citizens. Exchanging the sword for the plough, their domain bloomed like a garden. The rich cultivation that covered their fields bore as conclusive testimony to their skill as husbandmen, as their victories had done to their courage as warriors. Once, when on a tour through Bohemia, Aeneas Sylvius came to their gates; ¹¹ and though “this rascally people” did not believe in transubstantiation, he preferred lodging amongst them for the night to sleeping in the open fields, where, as he confesses, though the confession somewhat detracts from the merit of the action, he would have been exposed to robbers. They gave the future Pope a most cordial welcome, and treated him with “Slavonic hospitality.” ¹²

About the year 1455, the Taborites formed themselves into a distinct Church under the name of the “United Brethren.” They looked around them: error covered the earth; all societies needed to be purified, the Calixtines as well as the Romanists; “the evil was immedicable.” ¹³ So they judged; therefore they resolved to separate themselves from all other bodies, and build up truth anew from the foundations. This step exposed them to the bitter enmity of both Calixtines and Roman Catholics. They now became the object of a murderous persecution, in which they suffered far more than they had done in common with their countrymen in the Hussite wars.

⁹Krasinski, Slavonia, pp. 137 - 141.

¹⁰Lenfant, Hist. Conc. Basle, tom. 2, livr. 18, pp. 49, 50.

¹¹Ibid., tom. 2, livr. 21, p. 155.

¹²Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 130.

¹³Comenius, Hist. Eccles. Bohem., p. 61: “immedicabile esse hoc malum.”

Rochyzana, who till now had befriended them, suffered himself to be alienated from and even incensed against them; and Podiebrad, their king, tarnished his fame as a patriotic and upright ruler by the cruel persecution which he directed against them. They were dispersed in the woods and mountains; they inhabited dens and caves; and in these abodes they were ever careful to prepare their meals by night, lest the ascending smoke should betray their lurking-places. Gathering round the fires which they kindled in these subterranean retreats in the cold of winter, they read the Word of God, and united in social worship. At times, when the snow lay deep, and it was necessary to go abroad for provisions, they dragged a branch behind them on their return, to obliterate their footsteps and make it impossible for their enemies to track them to their hiding-places. ¹⁴

Were they alone of all the witnesses of truth left on the earth, or were there others, companions with them in the faith and patience of the kingdom of Jesus Christ? They sent messengers into various countries of Christendom, to inquire secretly and bring them word again. These messengers returned to say that everywhere darkness covered the face of the earth, but that nevertheless, here and there, they had found isolated confessors of the truth - a few in this city and a few in that, the object like themselves of persecution; and that amid the mountains of the Alps was an ancient Church, resting on the foundations of Scripture, and protesting against the idolatrous corruptions of Rome. This intelligence gave great joy to the Taborites; they opened a correspondence with these confessors, and were much cheered by finding that this Alpine Church agreed with their own in the articles of its creed, the form of its ordination, and the ceremonies of its worship.

The question of ordination occasioned the Taborites no little perplexity. They had left the Roman Church, they had no bishop in their ranks; how were they to perpetuate that succession of pastors which Christ had appointed in his Church? After many anxious deliberations, for "their minds were harassed," says Comenius, "with the fear that the ordination of presbyter by presbyter would not be held valid," ¹⁵ they proceeded according to the following somewhat

¹⁴Comenius, *Hist. Eccles. Bohem.*, pp. 63 - 68.

¹⁵"An satis legitima foret ordinatio si presbyter presbyterum crearet, non vero episcopus?" (Comenius, *Hist. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 69.)

novel fashion. In the year 1467 their chief men, to the number of about seventy, out of all Bohemia and Moravia, met in a plain called Lhota, in the neighborhood of the town of Richnovia. Humbling themselves with many tears and prayers before God, they resolved on an appeal by lot to the Divine omniscience as to who should be set over them as pastors. They selected by suffrage nine men from among themselves, from whom three were to be chosen to be ordained. They then put twelve schedules or voting papers into the hands of a boy who was kept ignorant of the matter, and they ordered him to distribute these schedules among the nine persons already selected. Of the twelve voting papers nine were blanks, and three were inscribed with the word *Est* - -i.e., It is the will of God. The boy distributed the schedules, and it was found that the three bearing the word *Est* had been given to the three following persons: [213] - Matthew Kunwaldius, "one of the most pious of men;" Thomas Przelaucius, "a very learned man;" and Elias Krzenovius, who was "distinguished for his great parts." They received ordination, by the imposition of hands, from a body of Waldensian pastors, including two whom Comenius styles bishops, and one of whom, Stephen, soon thereafter suffered martyrdom at the stake in Vienna. ¹⁶

The death of Podiebrad and the accession of the Polish prince, Vladislav, in 1471 brought them deliverance from persecution. The quiet they now enjoyed was followed by an increase in the number of their congregations. Their lot was cast in evil days, but they knew that the appointed years of darkness must be fulfilled. They remembered the words first uttered by Huss, and repeated by Jerome, that a century must revolve before the day should break. These were to the Taborites what the words of Joseph were to the tribes in the House of Bondage: "I die, and God will surely visit you, and bring you out." The prediction kept alive their hopes in the night of their persecution, and in the darkest hour their eyes were still turned towards the horizon like men who watch for the morning. Year passed after year. The end of the century arrived: it found 200 churches of the "United Brethren" in Bohemia and Moravia. ¹⁷ So goodly was the remnant which, escaping the destructive fury of fire

¹⁶Comenius, *Hist. Eccles. Bohem.*, pp. 68 - 71.

¹⁷Comenius, *Hist. Eccles. Bohem.*, p. 74.

and sword, was permitted to see the dawning of that day which Huss had foretold.

**Book 4: Christendom at the Opening of the
Sixteenth Century**

Chapter 1: Protestantism and Medievalism

Ancient Society Discarded—New Races brought on Stage—Their Capacity for Progress—The Reformation not the Possible before the Sixteenth Century—Medievalism Revives—A Conflict—Odds—The Victory of the Weak

We are now arrived at the sixteenth century. For a thousand years the Great Ruler had been laying, in the midst of wars and great ethnical revolutions, the foundations of a new and more glorious edifice than any that former ages had seen. Ancient society was too enfeebled by slavery, and too corrupted by polytheism, to be able to bear the weight of the structure about to be erected. The experiment had been tried of rearing the new social edifice upon the old foundations, but the attempt had turned out a failure. By the fourth century, the Gospel, so warmly embraced at first by the Greek and Roman nations, had begun to decline - had, in fact, become greatly corrupted. It was seen that these ancient races were unable to advance to the full manhood of Christianity and civilization. They were continually turning back to old models and established precedents. They lacked the capacity of adapting themselves to new forms of life, and surrendering themselves to the guidance of great principles. What was to be done? Must the building which God purposed to erect be abandoned, because a foundation sufficiently strong and sound could not be found for it? Should Christianity remain the half-finished structure, or rather the defaced ruin, which the fourth and fifth centuries beheld it?

An answer was given to this question when the gates of the North were opened, and new and hardy races, issuing from the obscure regions of Germany, spread themselves over Southern and Western Europe. An invisible Power marched before these tribes, and placed each - the Huns, the Vandals, the Burgundians, the Franks, the Lombards - in that quarter of Christendom which best suited the part each was destined to play in that great drama of which the

stamping out of the laws, the religion, and the government of the old world was the first act. The same Power which guided their march from the remote lands of their birth, and chose for them their several habitations, continued to watch over the development of their manners, the formation of their language, and the growth of their literature and their art, of their laws and their government; and thus, in the slow course of the centuries, were laid firm and broad the foundations of a new order of things. These tribes had no past to look back upon. They had no storied traditions and observances which they trembled to break through. There was no spell upon them like that which operated so mischievously upon the Greek and Latin races. They were free to enter the new path. Daring, adventurous, and liberty-loving, we can trace their steady advance, step by step, through the convulsions of the tenth century, the intellectual awakening of the twelfth, and the literary revival of the fifteenth, onward to the great spiritual movement of the sixteenth.

It is at this great moral epoch that we are now arrived. It will aid us if we pause in our narrative, and glance for a moment at the constitution of Europe, and note specially the spirit of its policy, the play of its ambitions, and the crisis to which matters were fast tending at the opening of the sixteenth century. This will enable us to understand what we may term the timing of the Reformation. We have just seen that this great movement was not possible before the century we speak of, for till then there was no stable basis for it in the condition of the Teutonic nations. The rapid survey that is to follow will show us further that this renewal of society could not, without the most disastrous consequences to the world, have been longer delayed. Had the advent of Protestantism been postponed for a century or two beyond its actual date, not only would all the preparations of the previous ages have miscarried, but the world would have been overtaken, and society, it may be, dissolved a second time, by a tremendous evil, which had been growing for some time, and had now come to a head. Without the Protestantism of the sixteenth century, not only would the intellectual awakening of the twelfth and the literary revival of the fifteenth century have been in vain, but the mental torpor, and it may be the religion also, of the Turk, would at this day have been reigning in Europe. Christendom, at the epoch of which we speak, had only

two things in its choice - to accept the Gospel, and fight its way through scaffolds and stakes to the liberty which the Gospel brings with it, or to crouch down beneath the shadow of a universal Spanish monarchy, to be succeeded in no long time by the yet gloomier night of Moslem despotism.

It would require more space than is here at our disposal to pass in review the several kingdoms of Europe, and note the transformation which all of them underwent as the era of Protestantism approached. Nor is this necessary. The characteristic of the Christendom of that age lay in two things - first in the constitution and power of the Empire, and secondly in the organization and supremacy of the Papacy. For certain ends, and within certain limits, each separate State of Europe was independent; it could pursue its own way, make war with whom it had a mind, or conclude a peace when it chose; but beyond these limits each State was simply the member of a corporate body, which was under the sway of a double directorate. First came the Empire, which in the days of Charlemagne, and again in the days of Charles V., assumed the presidency of well-nigh the whole of Europe. Above the Empire was the Papacy. Wielding a subtler influence and armed with higher sanctions, it was the master of the Empire in even a greater degree than the Empire was the master of Europe.

It is instructive to mark that, at the moment when the Protestant principle was about to appear, Medievalism stood up in a power and grandeur unknown to it for ages. The former was at its weakest, the latter had attained its full strength when the battle between them was joined. To see how great the odds, what an array of force Medievalism had at its service, and to be able to guess what would have been the future of Christendom and the world, had not Protestantism come at this crisis to withstand, nay, to vanquish the frightful combination of power that menaced the liberties of mankind, and to feel how marvelous in every point of view was the victory which, on the side of the weaker power, crowned this great contest, we must turn first to the Empire.

Chapter 2: The Empire

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Fall of Ancient Empire—Revived by the Pope—Charlemagne—The Golden Bull—The Seven Electors—Rules and Forms of Election—Ceremony of Coronation—Insignia—Coronation Feast—Emperor's Power Limited—Charles V—Capitulation—Spain—Becomes One Monarchy on the Approach of the Reformation—Its Power Increased by the Discoveries of Columbus—Brilliant Assemblage of States under Charles V—Liberty in Danger—Protestantism comes to Save it

Picture: View in Frankfort-on-the-Main

Picture: View in Ghent

The one great Empire of ancient Rome was, in the days of Valentinian (A.D. 364), divided into two, the Eastern and the Western. The Turk eventually made himself heir to the Eastern Empire, taking forcible possession of it by his great guns, and savage but warlike hordes. The Western Empire has dragged out a shadowy existence to our own day. There was, it is true, a parenthesis in its life; it succumbed to the Gothic invasion, and for awhile remained in abeyance; but the Pope raised up the fallen fabric. The genius and martial spirit of the Caesars, which had created this Empire at the first, the Pope could not revive, but the name and forms of the defunct government he could and did resuscitate. He grouped the kingdoms of Western Europe into a body or federation, and selecting one of their kings he set him over the confederated States, with the title of Emperor. This Empire was a fictitious or nominal one; it was the image or likeness of the past reflecting itself on the face of modern Europe.

The Empire dazzled the age which witnessed its sudden erection. The constructive genius and the marvelous legislative and administrative powers of Charlemagne, its first head, succeeded in giving it a show of power; but it was impossible by a mere fiat to plant those elements of cohesion, and those sentiments of homage to law and order, which alone could guarantee its efficiency and permanency.

It supposed an advance of society, and a knowledge on the part of mankind of their rights and duties, which was far from being the fact. “The Empire of the Germans,” says the historian Muller, “was constituted in a most extraordinary manner: it was a federal republic; but its members were so diverse with regard to form, character, and power, that it was extremely difficult to introduce universal laws, or to unite the whole nation in measures of mutual interest.”¹ “The Golden Bull,” says Villers, “that strange monument of the fourteenth century, fixed, it is true, a few relations of the head with the members; but nothing could be more indistinct than the public law of all those States, independent though at the same time united... Had not the Turks, at that time the violent enemies of all Christendom, come during the first years of the reign of Frederick to plant the crescent in Europe, and menaced incessantly the Empire with invasion, it is not easy to see how the feeble tie which bound that body together could have remained unbroken. The terror inspired by Mahomet II. and his ferocious soldiers, was the first common interest which led the princes of Germany to unite themselves to one another, and around the imperial throne.”²

The author last quoted makes mention of the Golden Bull. Let us bestow a glance on this ancient and curious document; it will bring before us the image of the time. Its author was Charles IV., Emperor and King of Bohemia. Pope Gregory, about the year 997, it is believed, instituted seven electors. Of these, three were Churchmen and three lay princes, and one of kingly rank was added, to make up the mystic number of seven, as some have thought, but more probably to prevent equality of votes. The three Churchmen were the Archbishop of Treves, Chancellor for France; the Archbishop of Mainz, Chancellor for Germany; the Archbishop of Cologne, Chancellor for Italy. The four laymen were the King of Bohemia, the Duke of Saxony, the Count Palatine of the Rhine, and the Marquis of Brandenburg.

The Archbishop of Mainz, by letters patent, was to fix the day of election, which was to take place not later than three months from the death of the former emperor. Should the archbishop fail to

¹Muller, *Univ. Hist.*, vol. 2, p. 427; Lond., 1818.

²Villers, *Essay on the Reformation*, pp. 193 - 195.

summon the electors, they were to meet notwithstanding within the appointed time, and elect one to the imperial dignity. The electors were to afford to each other free passage and a safe-conduct through their territories when on their way to the discharge of their electoral duties. If an elector could not come in person he might send a deputy. The election was to take place in Frankfort-on-the-Maine. No elector was to be permitted to enter the city attended by more than two hundred horsemen, whereof fifty only were to be armed. The citizens of Frankfort were made responsible for the safety of the electors, under the penalty of loss of goods and privileges. The morning after their arrival, the electors, attired in their official habits, proceeded on horseback from the council-hall to the cathedral church of St. Bartholomew, where mass was sung. Then the Archbishop of Mainz administered an oath at the altar to each elector, that he would, without bribe or reward, choose a temporal head for Christendom. Thereafter they met in secret conclave. Their decision must be come to within thirty days, but if deferred beyond that period, they were to be fed on bread and water, and prevented leaving the city till they had completed the election. A majority of votes constituted a valid election, and the decision was to be announced from a stage erected for the purpose in front of the choir of the cathedral.

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The person chosen to the imperial dignity took an oath to maintain the profession of the Catholic faith, to protect the Church in all her rights, to be obedient to the Pope, to administer justice, and to conserve all the customs and privileges of the electors and States of the Empire. The imperial insignia were then given him, consisting of a golden crown, a scepter, a globe called the imperial apple, the sword of Charlemagne, a copy of the Gospels said to have been found in his grave, and a rich mantle which was presented to one of the emperors by an Arabian prince.³

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³The insignia were kept in one of the churches of Nuremberg; Misson, who traveled 200 years ago, describes them. The diadem or crown of Charlemagne is of gold and weighs fourteen pounds. It is covered nearly all over with precious stones, and is surmounted by a cross. The scepter and globe are of gold. "They say," remarks Misson, "that the sword was brought by an angel from heaven. The robe called Dalmatich of Charlemagne is of a violet color, embroidered with pearls, and strewed with eagles of gold, and a great number of jewels. There are likewise the cope, the stole; the gloves, the breeches, the stockings,

[218] The ceremonies enjoined by the Golden Bull to be observed at the coronation feast are curious; the following minute and graphic account of them is given by an old traveller: - "In solemn court the emperor shall sit on his throne, and the Duke of Saxony, laying a heap of oats as high as his horse's saddle before the court-gate, shall, with a silver measure of twelve marks' price, deliver oats to the chief equerry of the stable, and then, sticking his staff in the oats, shall depart, and the vice-marshal shall distribute the rest of the oats. The three archbishops shall say grace at the emperor's table, and he of them who is chancellor of the place shall lay reverently the seals before the emperor, which the emperor shall restore to him; and the staff of the chancellor shall be worth twelve marks silver. The Marquis of Brandenburg, sitting upon his horse, with a silver basin of twelve marks' weight, and a towel, shall alight from his horse and give water to the emperor. The Count Palatine, sitting upon his horse, with four dishes of silver with meat, each dish worth three marks, shall alight and set the dishes on the table. The King of Bohemia, sitting upon his horse, with a silver cup worth twelve marks, filled with water and wine, shall alight and give it the emperor to drink. The gentleman of Falkenstein, under-chamberlain, the gentleman of Nortemberg, master of the kitchen, and the gentleman of Limburch, vice-butler, or in their absence the ordinary officers of the court, shall have the said horses, basin, dishes, cup, staff, and measure, and shall after wait at the emperor's table. The emperor's table shall be six feet higher than any other table, where he shall sit alone, and the table of the empress shall be by his side three feet lower. The electors' tables shall be three feet lower than that of the empress, and all of equal height, and three of them shall be on the emperor's right hand, three on his left hand, and one before his face, and each shall sit alone at his table. When one elector has done his office he shall go and stand at his own table, and so in order the rest, till all have performed their offices, and then all seven shall sit down at one time."

"The emperor shall be chosen at Frankfort, crowned at Augsburg, and shall hold his first court at Nuremberg, except there be some and the buskins." (Maximilian Misson, *New Voyage to Italy, etc.*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 117; Lond., 1739.)

lawful impediment. The electors are presumed to be Germans, and their sons at the age of seven years shall be taught the grammar, and the Italian and Slavonian tongues, so as at fourteen years of age they may be skillful therein and be worthy assessors to the emperor.”⁴

The electors are, by birth, the privy councilors of the emperor; they ought, in the phraseology of Charles IV., “to enlighten the Holy Empire, as seven shining lights, in the unity of the sevenfold spirit;” and, according to the same monarch, are “the most honorable members of the imperial body.”⁵ The rights which the emperor could exercise on his own authority, those he could exert with the consent of the electors, and those which belonged to him only with the concurrence of all the princes and States of the Empire have been variously described. Generally, it may be said that the emperor could not enact new laws, nor impose taxes, nor levy bodies of men, nor make wars, nor erect fortifications, nor form treaties of peace and alliances, except with the concurrent voice of the electors, princes, and States. He had no special revenue to support the imperial dignity, and no power to enforce the imperial commands. The princes were careful not to make the emperor too powerful, lest he should abridge the independent sovereignty which each exercised within his own dominions, and the free cities were equally jealous lest the imperial power should encroach upon their charters and privileges. The authority of the emperor was almost entirely nominal. We speak of the times preceding the peace of Westphalia; by that settlement the constitution of the Empire was more accurately defined.

Its first days were its most vigorous. It began to decline when no longer upheld by the power and guided by the genius of Charlemagne. The once brilliant line of Pepin had now ceased to produce warriors and legislators. By a sudden break-down it had degenerated into a race of simpletons and imbeciles. By-and-by the Empire passed from the Frank kings to the Saxon monarchs. Under the latter it recovered a little strength; but soon Gregory

⁴An Itinerary written by Fynes Moryson, Gent., first in the Latin tongue, and then translated by him into English; containing his ten years travell through the twelve dominions of Germany, Bohmerland, Sweitzerland, Netherland, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Turkey, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland. Fol.; Lond., 1617. Pt. 3, p. 191.

⁵Muller, vol. 2, p. 432.

VII. came with his grand project of making the tiara supreme not only over all crowns, but above the imperial diadem itself. Gregory succeeded in the end of the day, for the issue of the long and bloody war which he commenced was that the Empire had to bow to the miter, and the emperor to take an oath of vassalage to the Pontiff. The Empire had only two elements of cohesion - Roman Catholicism within, and the terror of the Turk without. Its constituent princes were rivals rather than members of one confederacy. Animosities and dissensions were continually springing up amongst them. They invaded each other's territories, regardless of the displeasure of the emperor. By these wars trade was impeded, knowledge repressed, and outrage and rapine flourished to a degree that threatened society itself with destruction. The authors of these calamities at last felt the necessity of devising some other way of adjusting their quarrels than by the sword. The Imperial Council, the Aulic Diet, the Diet of the Empire, were the successive methods had recourse to for obviating these frequent and cruel resorts to force, which were giving to the provinces of the Empire the appearance of a devastated and uninhabited region.

[219] In A.D. 1519, by the death of Maximilian, the imperial crown became vacant. Two illustrious and powerful princes came forward to contest the brilliant prize - Francis I. of France, and Charles of Austria, the grandson of Maximilian, and King of Spain. Henry VIII. of England, the third great monarch of the age, also entered the lists, but finding at an early stage of the contest that his chance of success was small, he withdrew. Francis I. was a gallant prince, a chivalrous soldier, a friend of the new learning, and so frank and affable in his manners that he won the affection of all who approached him. But the Germans were averse to accept as the head of their Empire the king of a nation whose genius, language, and manners were so widely different from their own. Their choice fell on Charles, who, though he lacked the brilliant personal qualities of his rival, drew his lineage from their own race, had his cradle in one of their own towns, Ghent, and was the heir of twenty-eight kingdoms.

There was danger as well as safety in the vast power of the man whom the Germans had elected to wear a crown which had in it so much grandeur and so little solid authority. The conqueror of the East, Selim II., was perpetually hovering upon their frontier.

They needed a strong arm to repel the invader, and thought they had found it in that of the master of so many kingdoms; but the hand that shielded them from Moslem tyranny might, who could tell, crush their own liberties. It behooved them to take precautions against this possible catastrophe. They framed a Capitulation or claim of rights, enumerating and guaranteeing the privileges and immunities of the Germanic Body; and the ambassadors of Charles signed it in the name of their master, and he himself confirmed it by oath at his coronation. In this instrument the princes of Germany unconsciously provided for the defense of higher rights than their own royalties and immunities. They had erected an asylum to which Protestantism might retreat, when the day should come that the emperor would raise his mailed hand to crush it.

Charles V. was more powerful than any emperor had been for many an age preceding. To the imperial dignity, a shadow in the case of many of his predecessors, was added in his the substantial power of Spain. A singular concurrence of events had made Spain a mightier kingdom by far than any that had existed in Europe since the days of the Caesars. Of this magnificent monarchy the whole resources were in the hands of the man who was at once the wearer of the imperial dignity and the enemy of the Reformation. This makes it imperative that we should bestow a glance on the extent and greatness of the Spanish kingdom, when estimating the overwhelming force now arrayed against Protestantism.

As the Reformation drew nigh, Spain suddenly changed its form, and from being a congeries of diminutive kingdoms, it became one powerful empire. The various principalities, which up till this time dotted the surface of the Peninsula, were now merged into the two kingdoms of Arragon and Castile. There remained but one other step to make Spain one monarchy, and that step was taken in A.D. 1469, by the marriage of Ferdinand of Arragon and Isabella of Castile. In a few years thereafter these two royal personages ascended the thrones of Arragon and Castile, and thus all the crowns of Spain were united on their head. One monarch now swayed his scepter over the Iberian Peninsula, from San Sebastian to the Rock of Gibraltar, from the Pyrenees to the straits that wash the feet of the mountains of Mauritania. The whole resources of the country now found their way

into one exchequer; all its tribes were gathered round one standard; and its whole power was wielded by one hand.

Spain, already great, was about to become still greater. Columbus was just fitting out the little craft in which he was to explore the Atlantic, and add, by his skill and adventurous courage, to the crown of Spain the most brilliant appendage which subject ever gave to monarch. Since the days of old Rome there had arisen no such stupendous political structure as that which was about to show itself to the world in the Spanish Monarchy. Spain itself was but a unit in the assemblage of kingdoms that made up this vast empire. The European dependencies of Spain were numerous. The fertile plains and vine-clad hills of Sicily and Naples were hers. The vast garden of Lombardy, which the Po waters and the Alps enclose, with its queenly cities, its plantations of olive and mulberry, its corn and oil and silk, were hers. The Low Countries were hers, with their canals, their fertile meadows stocked with herds, their cathedrals and museums, and their stately towns, the seats of learning and the hives of industry. As if Europe were too narrow to contain so colossal a power, Spain stretched her scepter across the great western sea, and ample provinces in the New World called her mistress. Mexico and Peru were hers, and the products of their virgin soils and the wealth of their golden mines were borne across the deep to replenish her bazaars and silver shops. It was not the Occident only that poured its treasures at her feet; Spain laid her hand on the Orient, and the fragrant spices and precious gems of India ministered to her pleasure. The sun never set on the dominions of Spain. The numerous countries that owned her sway sent each whatever was most precious and most prized among its products, to stock her markets and enrich her exchequer. To Spain flowed the gums of Arabia, the drugs of Molucca, the diamonds of Borneo, the wheat of Lombardy, the wine of Naples, the rich fabrics worked on the looms of Bruges and Ghent, the arms and cutlery forged in the factories and wrought up in the workshops of Liege and Namur.

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This great empire was served by numerous armies and powerful fleets. Her soldiers, drawn from every nation, and excellently disciplined, were brave, hardy, familiar with danger, and inured to every climate from the tropics to the arctic regions. They were led by commanders of consummate ability, and the flag under which they

marched had conquered on a hundred battlefields. When the master of all these provinces, armies and fleets, added the imperial diadem, as Charles V. did, to all his other dignities, his glory was perfected. We may adapt to the Spanish monarch the bold image under which the prophet presented the greatness of the Assyrian power. "The" Spaniard "was a cedar in" Europe "with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth." (Ezekiel 31:3-5)

The monarch of Spain, though master of so much, was laying schemes for extending the limits of his already overgrown dominions, and making himself absolute and universal lord. Since the noon of the Roman power, the liberties of the world had at no time been in so great peril as now. The shadow of a universal despotism was persistently projecting itself farther and yet farther upon the kingdoms and peoples of Western Europe. There was no principle known to the men of that age that seemed capable of doing battle with this colossus, and staying its advance. This despotism, into whose hands as it seemed the nations of Christendom had been delivered, claimed a Divine right, and, as such, was upheld by the spiritual forces of priestcraft, and the material aids of fleets and legions. Liberty was retreating before it. Literature and art had become its allies, and were weaving chains for the men whom they had promised to emancipate. As Liberty looked around, she could see no arm on which to lean, no champion to do battle for her. Unless Protestantism had arrived at that crisis, a universal despotism would have covered Europe, and Liberty banished from the earth must have returned to her native skies. "Dr. Martin Luther, a monk from the county of Mansfeld... by his heroism alone, imparted to the half of Europe a new soul; created an opposition which became the safeguard of freedom." ⁶

⁶Muller, Univ. Hist., vol. 3, sec. 1, p. 2; Lond., 1818. "If the tide of events had followed in the sixteenth century, and in those which succeeded, the course in which it had hitherto flowed, nothing could have saved Europe from approaching servitude, and

Chapter 3: The Papacy, or Christendom Under the Tiara

Complex Constitution of the Papacy—Temporal Sovereignty limited to Papal States—Pontifical Supremacy covers all Christendom—Governmental Machinery—Legate-a-latere—Interdict—The Concordat—Concordat with Austria—The Papacy in Piedmont—Indulgences—The Confessional—The Papacy Absolute in Temporals as in Spirituals—Enormous Strength

Picture: Liege

Picture: Martin Luther

We now ascend to the summit of the European edifice as constituted at the beginning of the sixteenth century. There was a higher monarch in the world than the emperor, and a more powerful kingdom in Christendom than the Empire. That monarch was the Pope - that Empire, the Papacy.

[221] Any view of Christendom that fails to take note of the relations of the Papacy to its several kingdoms, overlooks the prominent characteristic of Europe as it existed when the great struggle for religion and liberty was begun. The relation of the Papacy to the other kingdoms of Christendom was, in a word, that of dominancy. It was their chief, their ruler. It taught them to see in the Seven Hills, and the power seated thereon, the bond of their union, the fountain of their legislation, and the throne of their government. It thus knit all the kingdoms of Europe into one great confederacy or monarchy. They lived and breathed in the Papacy. Their fleets and armies, their constitutions and laws, existed more for it than for themselves. They were employed to advance the policy and uphold the power of the sovereigns who sat in the Papal chair.

the yoke of an universal monarchy.” (Villers, *Essay on the Spirit and Influence of the Reformation of Luther*, sec. 4, p. 125; Lond., 1805.)

In the one Pontifical government there were rolled up in reality two governments, one within the other. The smaller of these covered the area of the Papal States; while the larger, spurning these narrow limits, embraced the whole of Christendom, making of its thrones and nations but one monarchy, one theocratic kingdom, over which was stretched the scepter of an absolute jurisdiction.

In order to see how this came to pass, we must briefly enumerate the various expedients by which the Papacy contrived to exercise jurisdiction outside its own special territory, and by which it became the temporal not less than the spiritual head of Christendom - the real ruler of the kingdoms of medieval Europe. How a monarchy, professedly spiritual, should exercise temporal dominion, and especially how it should make its temporal dominion co-extensive with Christendom, is not apparent at first sight. Nevertheless, history attests the fact that it did so make it.

One main expedient by which the Papacy wielded temporal power and compassed political ends in other kingdoms was the office of "legate-a-latere." The term signifies an ambassador from the Pope's side. The legate-a-latere was, in fact, the alter ego of the Pope, whose person he represented, and with whose power he was clothed. He was sent into all countries, not to mediate but to govern; his functions being analogous to those of the deputies or rulers whom the pagan masters of the world were wont to send from Rome to govern the subject provinces of the Empire.

In the prosecution of his mission the legate-a-latere made it his first business in the particular country into which he entered to set up his court, and to try causes and pronounce judgment in the Pope's name. Neither the authority of the sovereign nor the law of the land was acknowledged in the court of the legate; all causes were determined by the canon law of Rome. A vast multitude of cases, and these by no means spiritual, did the legate contrive to bring under his jurisdiction. He claimed to decide all questions of divorce. These decisions involved, of course, civil issues, such as the succession to landed estates, the ownership of other forms of wealth, and in some instances the right to the throne. All questions touching the lands and estates of the convents, monasteries, and abbeys were determined by the legate. This gave him the direct control of one-half the landed property of most of the kingdoms of Europe. He could impose taxes,

and did levy a penny upon every house in France and England. He had power, moreover, to impose extraordinary levies for special objects of the Church upon both clergy and laity. He made himself the arbiter of peace and war. ¹ He meddled in all the affairs of princes, conducted perpetual intrigues, fomented endless quarrels, and sustained himself umpire in all controversies. If any one felt himself aggrieved by the judgment of the legate, he could have no redress from the courts of the country, nor even from the sovereign. He must go in person to Rome. Thus did the Pope, through his legate-a-latere, manage to make himself the grand justiciary of the kingdom. ²

The vast jurisdiction of the legate-a-latere was supported and enforced by the "interdict." The interdict was to the legate instead of an army. The blow it dealt was more rapid, and the subjugation it effected on those on whom it fell was more complete, than any that could have been achieved by any number of armed men. When a monarch proved obdurate, the legate unsheathed this sword against him. The clergy throughout the length and breadth of his kingdom instantly desisted from the celebration of the ordinances of religion. All the subjects were made partners with the sovereign in this ghostly but dreadful infliction. In an age when there was no salvation but through the priesthood, and no grace but through the channel of the Sacraments, the terrors of interdict were irresistible. All the signs of malediction everywhere visible throughout the land on which this terrible chastisement had been laid, struck the imagination with all the greater force that they were viewed as the symbols of a doom which did not terminate on earth, but which extended into the other

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¹Sir James Melville informs us that the bloody war which broke out between France and Spain in the reign of Henry II. was preceded by the Papal legate absolving the King of France from all the oaths and treaties by which he had ratified the peace between the two kingdoms but a little before. "As legate," said Caraffa, "from God's Vicar [Paul IV.] he would give him full absolution, he having power to bind and loose." (Memoirs of Sir James Melvil, p. 38; Edin., 1735.)

²Details regarding the functions of the legate-a-latere, and the acts in which his powers were shown, will be found in Dupin, *Biblioth.*, tom. 8, p. 56; also tom. 9, pp. 220, 223; and tom. 10, p. 126. Fleury, *Eccl. Hist.*, tom. 18, p. 225. Maimbourg, *Hist. du Pontific de S. Gregory le Grand*; also in *Words of Peace and Justice, etc.*, on the subject of "Diplomatic Relations with the Holy See," by the Right Rev. Nicholas Wiseman, D.D., Bishop of Melipotamus, Pro. V.A.L.D.; Lond., Charles Dolman, 1848.

world. The interdict in those ages never failed to gain its end, for the people, punished for the fault, real or supposed, of their sovereign, broke out into murmurs, sometimes into rebellion, and the unhappy prince found in the long run that he must either face insurrection or make his peace with the Church. It was thus the shadow of power only which was left the king; the substance of sovereignty filched from him was carried to Rome and vested in the chair of the Pope. ³

Another contrivance by which the Papacy, while it left to princes the name of king, took from them the actual government of their kingdoms, was the Concordat. These agreements or treaties between the Pope and the kings of Christendom varied in their minor details, but the leading provisions were alike in all of them, their key-note being the supremacy of Rome, and the subordination of the State with which that haughty power had deigned to enter into compact. The Concordat bound the government with which it was made to enact no law, profess no religion, open no school, and permit no branch of knowledge to be taught within its dominions, until the Pope had first given his consent. Moreover, it bound it to keep open the gates of the realm for the admission of such legates, bishops, and nuncios as the Pope might be pleased to send thither for the purpose of administering his spiritual authority, and to receive such bulls and briefs as he might be pleased to promulgate, which were to have the force of law in the counter whose rights and privileges these missives very possibly invaded, or altogether set aside. The advantages secured by the contracting parties on the other side were usually of the most meager kind, and were respected only so long as it was not for the interests of the Church of Rome to violate them. In short, the Concordat gave the Pope the first place in the government of the kingdom, leaving to the sovereign and the Estates of the Realm only the second. It bound down the prince in vassalage, and the people in serfdom political and religious. ⁴

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³The interdict began to be employed in the ninth century; the practice of missioning legates-a-latere dates from the tenth; both expedients were invented and brought into use a little before the breaking out of that great war between the Papacy and the Empire, which was to decide the question which was the stronger. The interdict and the legate materially contributed to the success which attended the Church in that conflict, and which made the mitre triumphant over the Empire.

⁴Let us, by way of illustration, look at the Concordat framed so recently as 1855 with Southern Germany, then under the House of Austria. Besides the privileges specified

Another formidable instrumentality for compassing the same ends was the hierarchy. The struggle commenced by Hildebrand, regarding investitures, ended in giving to the Pope the power of appointing bishops throughout all the Empire. This placed in the hands of the Pontiff the better half of the secular government of its kingdoms. The hierarchy formed a body powerful by their union, their intelligence, and the reverence which waited on their sacred office. Each member of that body had taken a feudal oath of obedience to the Pope.⁵ The bishop was no mere priest, he was a ruler as well, being possessed of jurisdiction - that is, the power of law - the law he administered being the canon law of Rome. The "chapter" was but another term for the court by which the bishop exercised that jurisdiction, and as it was a recognized doctrine that the jurisdiction of the bishop was temporal as well as spiritual, the hierarchy formed in fact a magistracy, and a magistracy planted in the country by a foreign power, under an oath of obedience to the power that had appointed it - a magistracy independent of the sovereign, and wielding a combined temporal and spiritual jurisdiction over every person in the realm, and governing him alike in his religious acts, in his political duties, and in his temporal possessions.

above, that Concordat gave the bishops the sole government of the priests; they could punish them according to canon law, and the priest had no appeal from the penal jurisdiction of the Church. If any one dared to appeal to the civil tribunals, he was instantly smitten with excommunication. Equally in the power of the bishops were all schools and teachers, nor could one give religious instruction in even the university without the episcopal sanction. The bishops moreover had the independent administration of all the lands and property of the Church and of the religious houses. They were guaranteed in free communication with Rome, in the independent exercise of their own discipline irrespective of the civil law, which amounted to the enforcement of canon law on all the subjects of the realm, in all cases in which the bishops saw fit to apply it. And they were, in fine, reinstated in their ancient penal jurisdiction. On the principle *Ex uno disce omnes*, we are forced to the conclusion that the bondage of medieval Christendom was complete, and that that bondage was to a far greater degree spiritual than temporal. It had its origin in the Roman Church; it was on the conscience and intellect that it pressed, and it gave its sanction to the temporal fetters in which the men of those ages were held.

⁵We quote one or two of the clauses of the oath: - "I will be faithful and obedient to our lord the Pope and to his successors.... In preserving and defending the Roman Papacy and the regalia of St. Peter, I will be their assistant against all men.... Heretics, schismatics, and rebels to our same lord, I will [pro posse pro persequar et impugnabo] persecute and attack to the utmost of my power." (*Decretum Greg. IX.*, lib. 2, tit. 24.)

Let us take the little kingdom of Sardinia as an illustration. On the 8th of January, 1855, a bill was introduced into the Parliament of Turin for the suppression of convents and the more equal distribution of Church lands. The habitable portion of Sardinia is mostly comprised in the rich valley of the Po, and its population amounts only to about four and a half millions. Yet it appeared from the bill that in this small territory there were seven archbishops, thirty-four bishops, forty-one chapters, with eight hundred and sixty canons attached to the bishoprics; seventy-three simple chapters, with four hundred and seventy canons; eleven hundred livings for the canons; and lastly, four thousand two hundred and forty-seven parishes, with some thousands of parish priests. The domains of the Church represented a capital of four hundred millions of francs, yielding a yearly revenue of seventeen millions and upwards. Nor was even this the whole of the ecclesiastical burden borne by the little State. To the secular clergy we have to add eight thousand five hundred and sixty-three persons who wore cowls and veils. These were distributed into six hundred and four religious houses, whose annual cost was two millions and a half of francs.

There were thus from twelve to twenty thousand persons in Piedmont, all under oath, or under vows equivalent to an oath, to obey only the orders that came from Rome. These held one-fourth of the lands of the kingdom; they were exempt from the jurisdiction of the laws. They claimed the right of dictating to all the subjects of the realm how to act in every matter in which duty was involved - that is, in every matter absolutely - and they had the power of compelling obedience by penalties of a peculiarly forcible kind. It is obvious at a glance that the actual government of the kingdom was in the hands of these men - that is, of their master at Rome.

Let us glance briefly at the other principalities of the peninsula - the Levitical State, as Italy was wont to be called. We leave out of view the secular clergy with their gorgeous cathedrals, so rich in silver and gold, as well as in statuary and paintings; nor do we include their ample Church lands, and their numerous dues drawn from the people. We confine ourselves to the ranks of the cloister. In 1863 a "Project of Law" was tabled in the Italian Chamber of

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Deputies for their suppression.⁶ From this “Project” it appeared that there were in Italy eighty-four orders of monks, distributed in two thousand three hundred and eighty-two religious houses. Each of these eighty-four orders had numerous affiliated branches radiating over the country. All held property, save the four Mendicant orders. The value of the conventual property was estimated at forty million lire, and the number of persons made a grand total of sixty-three thousand two hundred and thirty-nine. This does not include the conventual establishments of the Papal States, nor the religious houses of Piedmont, which had been suppressed previous to 1863. If we take these into account, we cannot estimate the monastic corps of Italy at less than a hundred thousand.⁷

Besides those we have enumerated there were a host of instrumentalities all directed to the same end, the enforcement even of the government of Rome, mainly in things temporal, in the dominions of other sovereigns. Chief among these was the Confessional. The Confessional was called “the place of penitence;” it was, in reality, a seat of jurisdiction. It was a tribunal the highest of all tribunals, because to the Papist the tribunal of God. Its terrors as far transcended those of the human judgment-seat, as the sword of eternal anathema transcends the gallows of temporal governments. It afforded, moreover, unrivaled facilities for sowing sedition and organizing rebellion. Here the priest sat unseen, digging, hour by hour and day after day, the mine beneath the prince he had marked out for ruin, while the latter never once suspected that his overthrow was being prepared till he was hurled from his seat. There was, moreover, the

⁶Progetto di Legge relativo alla Soppressione di Corporazione Religiose e Disposizione sull’asse Ecclesiastico - Camera dei Deputati, Sess. 1863, No. 159. Relazione della Commissione composta dei Deputati, etc., sul Progetto di Legge presentato dal Ministro di Grazia e Giustizia e dei Culti - Sess. 1863, No. 159, A. Resoconto dell’Amministrazione della casa Ecclesiastica; presentato dall’Presidente dal Consiglio dei Ministri, Ministro dell’Finanze - Sess. 1863, No. 215, A. Progetto di Legge. Soppressione delle decime Eccles. - Sess. 1863, No. 158.

⁷Progetto di Legge relativo alla Soppressione di Corporazione Religiose e Disposizione sull’asse Ecclesiastico - Camera dei Deputati, Sess. 1863, No. 159. Relazione della Commissione composta dei Deputati, etc., sul Progetto di Legge presentato dal Ministro di Grazia e Giustizia e dei Culti - Sess. 1863, No. 159, A. These and the above-quoted documents were printed, but not published, and we owe the use of them to the politeness of Sig. Malau, formerly member of the Italian Parliament.

device of dispensations and indulgences. Never did merchant by the most daring venture, nor statesman by the most ingenious scheme of finance, succeed in amassing such store of wealth as Rome did simply by selling pardon. She sent the vendors of her wares into all countries, and as all felt that they needed forgiveness, all flocked to her market; and thus, “as one gathereth eggs,” to employ the language of the prophet, so did Rome gather the riches of all the earth. She took care, moreover, that these riches should not “take to themselves wings and flee away.” She invented mortmain. Not a penny of her accumulated hoards, not an acre of her wide domains, did her “dead hand” ever let go. Her property was beyond the reach of the law; this crowned the evil. The estates of the nobles could be dealt with by the civil tribunals, if so overgrown as to be dangerous to the public good. But it was the fate of the ecclesiastical property ever to grow - and with it, of course, the pride and arrogance of its owners - and however noxious the uses to which it was turned, however much it tended to impoverish the resources of the State, and undermine the industry of the nation, no remedy could be applied to the mischief. Century after century the evil continued and waxed stronger, till at length the Reformation came and dissolved the spell by which Rome had succeeded in making her enormous possessions inviolable to the arm of the law; covering them, as she did, with the sanctions of Heaven.

Thus did Rome by these expedients, and others which it were tedious here to enumerate, extend her government over all the countries of Christendom, alike in temporals as in spirituals. “The Pope’s jurisdiction,” said a Franciscan, “is universal, embracing the whole world, its temporalities as well as its spiritualities.”⁸ Rome did not set up the chair of Peter bodily in these various countries, nor did she transfer to them the machinery of the Papal government as it existed in her own capital. It was not in the least necessary that she should do so. She gained her end quite as effectually by legates-a-latere, by Concordats, by bishops, by bulls, by indulgences, and by a power that stood behind all the others and lent them its sanction and force - namely, the Infallibility - a fiction, no doubt, but to the Romanist a

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⁸“Jurisdictionem habet universalem in toto mundo papa, nedum in spiritualibus sed temporalibus.” (Alvarus Pelagius, *De Planctu Eccles.*, lib. 1, cap. 13.)

reality - a moral omnipotence, which he no more dared disobey than he dared disobey God, for to him it was God. The Infallibility enabled the Pope to gather the whole Romanist community dispersed over the world into one army, which, obedient to its leader, could be put in motion from its center to its wide circumference, as if it were one man, forming an array of political, spiritual, and material force, which had not its like on earth.

Nor, when he entered the dominions of another sovereign, did the Pontiff. put down the throne, and rule himself in person. Neither was this in the least necessary. He left the throne standing, together with the whole machinery of the government tribunals, institutions, the army - all as aforesaid, but he deprived them of all force, and converted them into the instrumentalities and channels of Papal rule. They were made outlying portions of the Pontifical monarchy. Thus did Rome knit into one great federation the diverse nationalities and kingdoms of Western Europe. One and the same character - namely, the theocratic - did she communicate to all of them. She made all obedient to one will, and subservient to one grand scheme of policy. The ancient Rome had exhibited a marvelous genius for welding the nations into one, and teaching them obedience to her behests; but her proudest triumphs in this field were eclipsed by the yet greater success of Papal Rome. The latter found a more powerful principle of cohesion wherewith to cement the nations than any known to the former, and she had, moreover, the art to imbue them with a spirit of profounder submission than was ever yielded to her pagan predecessor; and, as a consequence, while the Empire of the Caesars preserved its unity unbroken, and its strength unimpaired, for only a brief space, that of the Popes has continued to flourish in power and great glory for well-nigh a thousand years.

Such was the constitution of Christendom as fully developed at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century. The verdict of Adam Smith, pronounced on Rome, viewed as the head and mistress of this vast confederation, expresses only the sober truth: "The Church of Rome," said he, "is the most formidable combination that ever was formed against the authority and security of civil government, as well as against the liberty, reason, and happiness of mankind." It is no mere scheme of ecclesiastical government that is before us, having for its aim only to guide the consciences

of men in those matters that appertain to God, and the salvation of their souls. It is a so-called Superhuman Jurisdiction, a Divine Vicegerency, set up to govern men in their understandings and consciences, in their goods, their liberties, and their lives. Against such a power mere earthly force would have naught availed. Reason and argument would have fought against it in vain. Philosophy and literature, raillery and skepticism, would have shot their bolts to no purpose. A Divine assailant only could overthrow it: that assailant was PROTESTANTISM.

**Book 5: History of Protestantism in
Germany to the Leipsic Disputation, 1519**

Chapter 1: Luther's Birth, Childhood, and School-Days

Geological Eras—Providential Eras—Preparations for a New Age—Luther's Parents—Birth of Martin—Mansfeld—Sent to School at Magdeburg—School Discipline—Removes to Eisenach—Sings for Bread—Madame Cotta—Poverty and Austerity of his Youth—Final Ends

Picture: View of Eisenach

Picture: John Luther taking his Son to School

Geologists tell us of the many revolutions, each occupying its cycle of ages, through which the globe passed before its preparation for man was completed. There were ages during which the earth was shrouded in thickest night and frozen with intensest cold: and there were ages more in which a blazing sun shed his light and heat upon it. [227] Periods passed in which the ocean slept in stagnant calm, and periods succeeded in which tempest convulsed the deep and thunder shook the heavens; and in the midst of the elemental war, the dry land, upheaved by volcanic fires, might have been seen emerging above the ocean. But alike in the tempest and in the calm nature worked with ceaseless energy, and the world steadily advanced toward its state of order. At last it reached it; and then, beneath a tranquil sky, and upon an earth covered with a carpet of verdure, man, the tenant and sovereign of the world, stood up.

So was it when the world was being prepared to become the abode of pure Churches and free nations. From the fall of the Western Empire to the eleventh century, there intervened a period of unexampled torpor and darkness. The human mind seemed to have sunk into senility. Society seemed to have lost the vital principle of progress. Men looked back to former ages with a feeling of despair. They recalled the varied and brilliant achievements of the early time, and sighed to think that the world's better days were past, that old age had come upon the race, and that the end of all things was at

hand. Indeed a belief was generally entertained that the year One thousand would usher in the Day of Judgment. It was a mistake. The world's best days were yet to come, though these - its true golden age - it could reach not otherwise than through terrible political and moral tempests.

The hurricane of the crusades it was that first broke the ice of the world's long winter. The frozen bands of Orion being loosed, the sweet influences of the Pleiades began to act on society. Commerce and art, poetry and philosophy appeared, and like early flowers announced the coming of spring. That philosophy, it is true, was not of much intrinsic value, but, like the sports of childhood which develop the limbs and strengthen the faculties of the future man, the speculations of the Middle Ages, wherewith the young mind of Europe exercised itself, payed the way for the achievements of its manhood.

By-and-by came the printing-press, truly a Divine gift; and scarcely had the art of printing been perfected when Constantinople fell, the tomb of ancient literature was burst open, and the treasures of the ancient world were scattered over the West. From these seeds were to spring not the old thoughts, but new ones of greater power and beauty. Next came the mariner's compass, and with the mariner's compass came a new world, or, what is the same thing, the discovery by man of the large and goodly dimensions of the world he occupies. Hitherto he had been confined to a portion of it only; and on this little spot he had planted and built, he had turned its soil with the plough, but oftener reddened it with the sword, unconscious the while that ampler and wealthier realms around him were lying unpeopled and uncultivated. But now magnificent continents and goodly islands rose out of the primeval night. It seemed a second Creation. On all sides the world was expanding around man, and this sudden revelation of the vastness of that kingdom of which he was lord, awoke in his bosom new desires, and speedily dispelled those gloomy apprehensions by which he had begun to be oppressed. He thought that Time's career was finished, and that the world was descending into its sepulcher; to his amazement and joy he saw that the world's youth was come only now, and that man was as yet but at the beginning of his destiny. He panted to enter on the new career opening before him.

Compared with his condition in the eleventh century, when man was groping in the thick night, and the rising breath of the crusades was just beginning to stir the lethargy of ages, it must have seemed to him as if he had already seen the full opening of the day. But the true light had not yet risen, if we except a feeble dawn, in the skies of England and Bohemia, where gathering clouds threatened to extinguish it. Philosophy and poetry, even when to these are added ancient learning and modern discoveries, could not make it day. If something better had not succeeded, the awakening of the sixteenth century would have been but as a watch in the night. The world, after those merely terrestrial forces had spent themselves, would have fallen back into its tomb. It was necessary that God's own breath should vivify it, if it was to continue to live. The logic of the schools, the perfume of letters, the galvanic forces of art could not make of the corpse a living man. As with man at first, so with society, God must breathe into it in order that it might become a living soul. The Bible, so long buried, was resuscitated, was translated into the various tongues of Europe, and thus the breath of God was again moving over society. The light of heaven, after its long and disastrous eclipse, broke anew upon the world.

[228] Three great princes occupied the three leading thrones of Europe. To these we may add the potentate of the Vatican, in some points the least, but in others the greatest of the four. The conflicting interests and passions of these four men preserved a sort of balance, and restrained the tempests of war from ravaging Christendom. The long and bloody conflicts which had devastated Germany were ended as the fifteenth century drew to its close. The sword rested meanwhile in Europe. As in the Roman world the wars of centuries were concluded, and the doors of the temple of Janus were shut, when a great birth was to take place, and a new era to open, so was it once again at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Protestantism was about to step upon the stage, and to proclaim the good news of the recovery of the long-lost Gospel; and on all sides, from the Carpathians to the Atlantic, there was comparative quiet, that the nations might be able to listen to the blessed tidings. It was now that Luther was born.

First of the father. His name was John - John Luther. His family was an old one, ¹ and had dwelt in these parts a long while. The patrimonial inheritance was gone, and without estate or title, rich only in the superior qualities of his mind, John Luther earned his daily bread by his daily labor. There is more of dignity in honest labor than in titled idleness.

This man married a daughter of one of the villagers of Neustadt, Margaret Lindemann by name. At the period of their marriage they lived near Eisenach, a romantic town at the foot of the Wartburg, with the glades of the Thuringian forest around it. Soon after their marriage they left Eisenach, and went to live at Eisleben, a town near by, belonging to the Counts of Mansfeld. ²

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They were a worthy pair, and, though in humble condition, greatly respected. John Luther, the father of the Reformer, was a fearer of God, very upright in his dealings and very diligent in his business. He was marked by his good sense, his manly bearing, and the firmness with which he held by his opinions. What was rare in that age, he was a lover of books. Books then were scarce, and consequently dear, and John Luther had not much money to spend on their purchase, nor much time to read those he was able to buy. Still the miner - for he was a miner by trade - managed to get a few, which he read at meal-times, or in the calm German evenings, after his return from his work.

Margaret Lindemann, the mother of Luther, was a woman of superior mind and character. ³ She was a peasant by birth, as we have said, but she was truly pious, and piety lends a grace to humble station which is often wanting in lofty rank. The fear of God gives a refinement to the sentiments, and a delicacy and grace to the manners, more fascinating by far than any conventional ease or airs which a coronet can bestow. The purity of the soul shining through the face lends it beauty, even as the lamp transmits its radiance through the alabaster vase and enhances its symmetry. Margaret Lindemann was looked up to by all her neighbors, who regarded her as a pattern to be followed for her good sense, her household economy, and her virtue. To this worthy couple, both much given

¹Melancthon. *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 4; Vratislaviae, 1819.

²Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p.5.

³Ibid.

to prayer, there was born a son, on the 10th of November, 1483.⁴ He was their first-born, and as the 10th of November is St. Martin's Eve, they called their son Martin. Thus was ushered into the world the future Reformer.

[230] When a prince is born, bells are rung, cannons are discharged, and a nation's congratulations are carried to the foot of the throne. What rejoicings and splendors around the cradle where lies the heir of some great empire! When God sends his heroes into the world there are no such ceremonies. They step quietly upon the stage where they are to act their great parts. Like that kingdom of which they are the heralds and champions, their coming is not with observation. Let us visit the cottage of John Luther, of Eisleben, on the evening of November 10th, 1483; there slumbers the miner's first-born. The miner and his wife are proud of their babe, no doubt; but the child is just like other German children; there is no indication about it of the wondrous future that awaits the child that has come into existence in this lowly household. When he grows up he will toil doubtless with his father as a miner. Had the Pope (Sextus V. was then reigning) looked in upon the child, and marked how lowly was the cot in which he lay, and how entirely absent were all signs of worldly power and wealth, he would have asked with disdain, "Can any harm to the Popedom come of this child? Can any danger to the chair of Peter, that seat more august than the throne of kings, lurk in this poor dwelling?" Or if the emperor had chanced to pass that way, and had learned that there was born a son to John Luther, the miner, "Well, what of that?" he would have asked; "there is one child more in Germany, that is all. He may one day be a soldier in my ranks, who knows, and help to fight my battles." How greatly would these potentates, looking only at things seen, and believing only in material forces, have miscalculated! The miner's child was to become mightier than Pope, mightier than emperor. One Luther was stronger than all the cardinals of Rome, than all the legions of the Empire. His voice was to shake the Popedom, and his strong hands were to pull down its pillars that a new edifice might be erected in its room. Again it might be said, as at the birth of a yet greater Child,

⁴Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 5. Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 7, p. 17; Lipsiae, 1694.

“He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.”

When Martin was six months old his parents removed to Mansfeld. At that time the portion of this world's goods which his father possessed was small indeed; but the mines of Mansfeld were lucrative, John Luther was industrious, and by-and-by his business began to thrive, and his table was better spread. He was now the owner of two furnaces; he became in time a member of the Town Council,⁵ and was able to gratify his taste for knowledge by entertaining at times the more learned among the clergy of his neighborhood, and the conversation that passed had doubtless its influence upon the mind of a boy of so quick parts as the young Martin.

The child grew, and might now be seen playing with the other children of Mansfeld on the banks of the Wipper. His home was happier than it had been, his health was good, his spirits buoyant, and his clear joyous voice rang out above those of his playmates. But there was a cross in his lot even then. It was a stern age. John Luther, with all his excellence, was a somewhat austere man. As a father he was a strict disciplinarian; no fault of the son went unpunished, and not un-frequently was the chastisement in excess of the fault. This severity was not wise. A nature less elastic than Luther's would have sunk under it into sullenness, or it may be hardened into wickedness. But what the father on earth did for his own pleasure, or from a mistaken sense of duty, the Father in heaven overruled for the lasting good of the future Reformer. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth, for it is in youth, sometimes even in childhood, that the great turning-points of life occur. Luther's nature was one of strong impulses; these forces were all needed in his future work; but, had they not been disciplined and brought under control, they might have made him rash, impetuous, and headlong; therefore he was betimes taught to submit to the curb. His nature, moreover, rich in the finest sensibilities, might, but for this discipline, have become self-indulgent. Turning away from the harder tasks of life, Luther might have laid himself out only to enjoy the good within his reach, had not the hardships and severities of his youth attempered

⁵Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 5.

his character, and imported into it that element of hardness which was necessary for the greater trials before him.

Besides the examples of piety which he daily beheld, Luther received a little rudimental instruction under the domestic roof. But by-and-by he was sent to school at Mansfeld. He was yet a "little one," to use Melancthon's phrase; so young, indeed, that his father sometimes carried him to school on his shoulders. ⁶ The thought that his son would one day be a scholar, cheered John Luther in his labours; and the hope was strengthened by the retentive memory, the sound understanding, and the power of application which the young Luther already displayed.

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At the age of fourteen years (1497) Martin was sent to the Franciscan school at Magdeburg. ⁷ At school the hardships and privations amid which his childhood had been passed not only attended him but increased. His master often flogged him; for it was a maxim of those days that nothing could be learned without a free use of the rod; and we can imagine that the buoyant or boisterous nature of the boy often led him into transgressions of the rules of school etiquette. He mentions having one day been flogged fifteen times. What added to his hardships was the custom then universal in the German towns, and continued till a recent date, if even now wholly abandoned, of the scholars begging their bread, in addition to the task of conning their lessons. They went, in small companies, singing from door to door, and receiving whatever alms the good burghers were pleased to give them. At times it would happen that they received more blows, or at least more rebuffs, than alms.

The instruction was gratis, but the young scholar had not bread to eat, and though the means of his father were ampler than before, all were needed for the support of his family, now numerous; and after a year Luther was withdrawn from Magdeburg and sent to a school in Eisenach, where having relatives, he would have less difficulty, it was thought, in supporting himself. These hopes were not realized, because perhaps his relations were poor. The young scholar had still to earn his meals by singing in the streets. One day Luther was perambulating Eisenach, stopping before its likeliest dwellings,

⁶Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 6.

⁷Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 6.

and striving with a brief hymn to woo the inmates to kindness. He was sore pressed with hunger, but no door opened, and no hand was extended to him. He was greatly downcast; he stood musing within himself what should become of him. Alas! he could not endure these hardships much longer; he must abandon his studies; he must return home, and work with his father in the mines. It was at that moment that Providence opened for him a home.

As he stood absorbed in these melancholy thoughts, a door near him was opened, and a voice bade him come in. He turned to see who it was that spoke to him. It was Ursula, the wife of Conrad Cotta, a man of consideration among the burghers of Eisenach.⁸ Ursula Cotta had marked the young scholar before. He was accustomed to sing in the church choir on Sundays. She had been struck with the sweetness of his voice. She had heard the harsh words with which he had been driven away from other doors. Taking pity, she took him in, and made him sit down at her board; and not only did she appease his hunger for the time, but her husband, won by the open face and sweet disposition of the boy, made him come and live with them.

Luther had now a home; he could eat without begging or singing for his bread. He had found a father and mother in this worthy pair. His heart opened; his young genius grew livelier and lovelier every day. Penury, like the chill of winter, had threatened to blight his powers in the bud; but this kindness, like the sun, with genial warmth, awakened them into new vigor. He gave himself to study with fresh ardour; tasks difficult before became easy now. If his voice was less frequently heard in the streets, it cheered the dwelling of his adopted parents. Madame Cotta was fond of music, and in what way could the young scholar so well repay her kindness as by cultivating his talent for singing, and exercising it for the delight of this "good Shunammite?" Luther passed, after this, nearly two years at Eisenach, equally happy at school in the study of Latin, rhetoric, and verse-making, and at home where his hours of leisure were filled up with song, in which he not unfrequently accompanied himself on the lute. He never, all his after-life, forgot either Eisenach or the good Madame Cotta. He was accustomed to speak of the former as

⁸Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 8, p. 20; Lipsiae, 1694.

“his own beautiful town,” and with reference to the latter he would say, “There is nothing kinder than a good woman’s heart.” The incident helped also to strengthen his trust in God. When greater perils threatened in his future career, when man stood aloof, and he could descry no deliverance near, he remembered his agony in the streets of Eisenach, and how visibly God had come to his help.

[232] We cannot but mark the wisdom of God in the training of the future Reformer. By nature he was loving and trustful, with a heart ever yearning for human sympathy, and a mind ever planning largely for the happiness of others. But this was not enough. These qualities must be attempered by others which should enable him to confront opposition, endure reproach, despise ease, and brave peril. The first without the last would have issued in mere benevolent schemings, and Luther would have died sighing over the stupidity or malignity of those who had thwarted his philanthropic projects. He would have abandoned his plans on the first appearance of opposition, and said, “Well, if the world won’t be reformed, I shall let it alone.” Luther, on the other hand, reckoned on meeting this opposition; he was trained to endure and bear with it, and in his early life we see the hardening and the expanding process going on by turns. And so is it with all whom God selects for rendering great services to the Church or to the world. He sends them to a hard school, and he keeps them in it till their education is complete. Let us mark the eagle and the bird of song, how dissimilar their rearing. The one is to spend its life in the groves, flitting from bough to bough, and enlivening the woods with its melody. Look what a warm nest it lies in; the thick branches cover it, and its dam sits brooding over it. How differently is the eaglet nursed! On yonder ledge, amid the naked crags, open to the lashing rain, and the pelting hail, and the stormy gust, are spread on the bare rock a few twigs. These are the nest of that bird which is to spend its after-life in soaring among the clouds, battling with the winds, and gazing upon the sun.

Luther was to spend his life in conflict with emperors and Popes, and the powers of temporal and spiritual despotism; therefore his cradle was placed in a miner’s cot, and his childhood and youth were passed amid hardship and peril. It was thus he came to know that man lives not to enjoy, but to achieve; and that to achieve anything

great, he must sacrifice self, turn away from man, and lean only on God.

Chapter 2: Luther's College Life

Erfurt—City and University—Studies—Aquinas, etc—Cicero and Virgil—A Bible—Bachelor of Arts—Doctor of Philosophy—Illness—Conscience awakens—Visits his Parents—Thunderstorm—His Vow—Farewell Supper to his Friends—Enters a Monastery

Picture: Luther Singing in the Streets of Eisenach

Picture: The Cathedral of Erfurt

In 1501 Luther entered the University of Erfurt. He had now attained the age of eighteen years. ¹ This seat of learning had been founded about a century before; it owed its rise to the patronage of the princely houses of Brunswick and Saxony, and it had already become one of the more famous schools of Central Europe. Erfurt is an ancient town. Journeying from Eisenach eastward, along the Thuringian plain, it makes an imposing show as its steeples, cathedral towers, and ramparts rise before the eye of the traveller. Thirsting for knowledge, the young scholar came hither to drink his fill. His father wished him to study law, not doubting that with his great talents he would speedily achieve eminence, and fill some post of emolument and dignity in the civic administration of his country. In this hope John Luther toiled harder than ever, that he might support his son more liberally than heretofore.

At Erfurt new studies engaged the attention of Luther. The scholastic philosophy was still in great repute. Aristotle, and the humbler but still mighty names of Aquinas, Duns, Occam, and others, were the great sovereigns of the schools. ² So had the verdict of the ages pronounced, although the time was now near when that verdict would be reversed, and the darkness of oblivion would quench those lights placed, as was supposed, eternally in the firmament for the guidance of mankind.

¹Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 7; Vratislaviae, 1819.

²*Ibid.*, p. 11.

The young man threw himself with avidity upon this branch of study. It was an attempt to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles; yet Luther profited by the effort, for the Aristotelian philosophy had some redeeming virtues. It was radically hostile to the true method of acquiring knowledge, afterwards laid open by Bacon; yet it tried the strength of the faculties, and the discipline to which it subjected them was beneficial in proportion as it was stringent. Not only did it minister to the ripening of the logical understanding, it gave an agility of mind, a keenness of discrimination, a dialectic skill, and a nicety of fence which were of the greatest value in the discussion of subtle questions. In these studies Luther forged the weapon which he was to wield with such terrible effect in the combats of his after-life.

Two years of his university course were now run. From the thorny yet profitable paths of the scholastics, he would turn aside at times to regale himself in the greener and richer fields opened to him in the orations of Cicero and the lays of Virgil. What he most studied to master was not the words but the thinking of the ancients; it was their wisdom which he wished to garner up.³ His progress was great; he became par excellence the scholar of Erfurt.⁴

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It was now that an event occurred that changed the whole future life of the young student. Fond of books, like his father, he went day by day to the library of the university and spent some hours amid its treasures. He was now twenty years of age, and he reveled in the riches around him. One day, as he took down the books from their shelves, and opened them one after another, he came to a volume unlike all the others. Taking it from its place, he opened it, and to his surprise found that it was a Bible - the Vulgate, or Latin translation of the Holy Scriptures, by Jerome.⁵

The Bible he had never seen till now. His joy was great. There are certain portions which the Church prescribes to be read in public on Sundays and saints' days, and Luther imagined that these were the whole Bible. His surprise was great when, on opening the volume, he found in it whole books and epistles of which he had never before heard. He began to read with the feelings of one to

³Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 7.

⁴"His genius," says Melancthon, "became the admiration of the whole college" (*toti Academiae Lutheri ingenium admiratio esset*). - *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 7.

⁵D'Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol. 1, p. 156; *Edin.*, 1846.

whom the heavens have been opened. The part of the book which he read was the story of Samuel, dedicated to the Lord from his childhood by his mother, growing up in the Temple, and becoming the witness of the wickedness of Eli's sons, the priests of the Lord, who made the people to transgress, and to abhor the offering of the Lord. In all this Luther could fancy that he saw no very indistinct image of his own times.

Day after day Luther returned to the library, took down the old book, devoured some Gospel of the New or story of the Old Testament, rejoicing as one that finds great store of spoil, gazing upon its page as Columbus may be supposed to have gazed on the plains and mountains of the New World, when the mists of ocean opened and unveiled it to him. Meanwhile, a change was passing upon Luther by the reading of that book. Other books had developed and strengthened his faculties, this book was awakening new powers within him. The old Luther was passing away, another Luther was coming in his place. From that moment began those struggles in his soul which were destined never to cease till they issued not merely in a new man, but a new age - a new Europe. Out of the Bible at Oxford came the first dawn of the Reformation: out of this old Bible at Erfurt came its second morning.

It was the year 1503. Luther now took his first academic degree. But his Bachelorship in Arts had nearly cost him his life. So close had been his application to study that he was seized with a dangerous illness, and for some time lay at the point of death. Among others who came to see him was an old priest, who seems to have had a presentiment of Luther's future distinction. "My bachelor," said he, "take heart, you shall not die of this sickness; God will make you one who will comfort many others; on those whom he loves he lays the holy cross, and they who bear it patiently learn wisdom." Luther heard, in the words of the aged priest, God calling him back from the grave. He recovered, as had been foretold, and from that hour he carried within him an impression that for some special purpose had his life been prolonged.⁶

After an interval of two years he became Master of Arts or Doctor of Philosophy. The laureation of the first scholar at Erfurt University,

⁶D'Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol. 1, pp. 157, 158.

then the most renowned in Germany, was no unimportant event, and it was celebrated by a torch-light procession. Luther saw that he already held no mean place in the public estimation, and might aspire to the highest honors of the State. As the readiest road to these, he devoted himself, in conformity with his father's wishes, to the bar, and began to give public lectures on the physics and ethics of Aristotle. ⁷ The old book seems in danger of being forgotten, and the Reformer of Christendom of being lost in the wealthy lawyer or the learned judge.

But God visited and tried him. Two incidents that now befell him brought back those feelings and convictions of sin which were beginning to be effaced amid the excitements of his laureation and the fascinations of Aristotle. Again he stood as it were on the brink of the eternal world. One morning he was told that his friend Alexius had been overtaken by a sudden and violent death. ⁸ The intelligence stunned Luther. His companion had fallen as it were by his side. Conscience, first quickened by the old Bible, again awoke.

Soon after this, he paid a visit to his parents at Mansfeld. He was returning to Erfurt, and was now near the city gate, when suddenly black clouds gathered overhead, and it began to thunder and lighten in an awful manner. A bolt fell at his feet. Some accounts say that he was thrown down. The Great Judge, he thought, had descended in this cloud, and he lay momentarily expecting death. In his terror he vowed that should God spare him he would devote his life to His service. The lightning ceased, the thunders rolled past, and Luther, rising from the ground and pursuing his journey with solemn steps, soon entered the gates of Erfurt. ⁹

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The vow must be fulfilled. To serve God was to wear a monk's hood - so did the age understand it, and so too did Luther. To one so fitted to enjoy the delights of friendship, so able to win the honors of life - nay, with these honors all but already grasped - a terrible wrench it must be to tear himself from the world and enter a monastery - a living grave. But his vow was irrevocable. The greater

⁷Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 8.

⁸Some say Alexius was killed by lightning, others that he fell in a duel. Melancthon says "he knows not how Luther's friend came by his death." (*Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 9.)

⁹Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 9, footnote.

the sacrifice, the more the merit. He must pacify his conscience; and as yet he knew not of the more excellent way.

Once more he will see his friends, and then - He prepares a frugal supper; he calls together his acquaintances; he regales them with music; he converses with apparent gaiety. And now the feast is at an end, and the party has broken up. Luther walks straight to the Augustinian Convent, on the 17th of August, 1505. He knocks at the gate; the door is opened, and he enters.

[235] To Luther, groaning under sin, and seeking deliverance by the
[236] works of the law, that monastery - so quiet, so holy, so near to
heaven, as he thought - seemed a very Paradise. Soon as he had
crossed its threshold the world would be shut out; sin, too, would be
shut out; and that sore trouble of soul which he was enduring would
be at an end. At this closed door the "Avenger" would be stayed. So
thought Luther as he crossed its threshold. There is a city of refuge
to which the sinner may flee when death and hell are on his track,
but it is not that into which Luther had now entered.

Chapter 3: Luther's Life in the Convent

Astonishment of his Townsmen—Anger of his Father—Luther's Hopes—Drudgery of the Convent—Beggings by Day—Studies by Night—Reads Augustine—Studies the Bible—His Agony of Soul—Needful Lessons

When his friends and townsmen learned on the morrow that Luther had taken the cowl, they were struck with stupefaction. That one with such an affluence of all the finer intellectual and social qualities, and to whom his townsmen had already assigned the highest post that genius can fill, should become a monk, seemed a national loss. His friends, and many members of the university, assembled at the gates of the monastery, and waited there two whole days, in the hope of seeing Luther, and persuading him to retrace the foolish step which a fit of caprice or a moment's enthusiasm had led him to take. The gate remained closed; Luther came not forth, though the wishes and entreaties of his friends were not unknown to him. What to him were all the rewards of genius, all the high posts which the world could offer? The one thing with him was how he might save his soul. Till a month had elapsed Luther saw no one.

When the tidings reached Mansfeld, the surprise, disappointment, and rage of Luther's father were great. He had toiled night and day to be able to educate his son; he had seen him win one academical honour after another; already in imagination he saw him discharging the highest duties and wearing the highest dignities of the State. In a moment all these hopes had been swept away; all had ended in a monk's hood and cowl. John Luther declared that nothing of his should his son ever inherit, and according to some accounts he set out to Erfurt, and obtaining an interview with his son at the convent gate, asked him sharply, "How can a son do right in disobeying the counsel of his parents?"

On an after-occasion, when telling his father of the impression made upon his mind by the thunderstorm, and that it was as if a voice

from heaven had called him to be a monk, "Take care," was John Luther's reply, "lest you have been imposed upon by an illusion of the devil." ¹

On entering the convent Luther changed his name to Augustine. But in the convent life he did not find that rest and peace to enjoy which he had fled thither. He was still seeking life, not from Christ, but from monastic holiness, and had he found rest in the convent he would have missed the eternal rest. It was not long till he was made to feel that he had carried his great burden with him into the monastery, that the apprehensions of wrath which haunted him in the world had followed him hither; that, in fact, the convent bars had shut him in with them; for here his conscience began to thunder more loudly than ever, and his inward torments grew every day more insupportable. Whither shall Luther now flee? He knows no holier place on earth than the cell, and if not here, where shall he find a shadow from this great heat, a rock of shelter from this terrible blast? God was preparing him for being the Reformer of Christendom, and the first lesson it was needful to teach him was what a heavy burden is unpardoned guilt, and what a terrible tormentor is an awakened conscience, and how impossible it is to find relief from these by works of self-righteousness. From this same burden Luther was to be the instrument of delivering Christendom, and he himself, first of all, must be made to feel how awful is its weight.

But let us see what sort of life it is that Luther leads in the monastery of the Augustines: a very different life indeed from that which he had led in the university!

[237] The monks, ignorant, lazy, and fond only of good cheer, were incapable of appreciating the character or sympathizing with the tastes of their new brother. That one of the most distinguished doctors of the university should enroll himself in their fraternity was indeed an honour; but did not his fame throw themselves into the shade? Besides, what good would his studies do their monastery? They would replenish neither its wine-cellar nor its larder. His brethren found a spiteful pleasure in putting upon him the meanest offices of the establishment. Luther unrepiningly complied. The brilliant scholar of the university had to perform the duties of porter,

¹Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, p. 19; Lipsiae, 1694.

“to open and shut the gates, to wind up the clock, to sweep the church, and to clean out the cells.”² Nor was that the worst; when these tasks were finished, instead of being permitted to retire to his studies, “Come, come!” would the monks say, “saccum per hackum - get ready your wallet: away through the town, and get us something to eat.” The book had to be thrown aside for the bag. “It is not by studying,” would the friars say, “but by begging bread, corn, eggs, fish, meat and money, that a monk renders himself useful to the cloister.” Luther could not but feel the harshness and humiliation of this: the pain must have been exquisite in proportion as his intellect was cultivated, and his tastes refined. But having become a monk, he resolved to go through with it, for how otherwise could he acquire the humility and sanctity he had assumed the habit to learn, and by which he was to earn peace now, and life hereafter? No, he must not draw back, or shirk either the labor or the shame of holy monkhood. Accordingly, traversing the streets, wallet on back the same through which he had strode so often as an honoured doctor - or knocking at the door of some former acquaintance or friend, and begging an alms, might now be seen the monk Augustine.

In this kind of drudgery was the day passed. At night, when the other monks were drowned in sleep, or in the good things which brother Martin had assisted in begging for them, and when he too, worn out with his many tasks, ought to have laid himself down to rest, instead of seeking his couch he trimmed his lamp, and opening the patristic and scholastic divines, he continued reading them till far into the night. St. Augustine was his especial favorite. In the writings of the Bishop of Hippo there is more of God's free grace, in contrast with the deep corruption of man, to himself incurable, than in any other of the Fathers; and Luther was beginning to feel that the doctrines of Augustine had their echo in his own experience. Among the scholastic theologians, Gerson and Occam, whom we have already mentioned as opponents of the Pope's temporal power, were the writers to whom he most frequently turned.³

But though he set great store on Augustine, there was another book which he prized yet more. This was God's own Word, a copy

²Adam, *Vita Luth.*, p. 103. Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, p. 21. D'Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol 1, p. 165.

³Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 11.

of which he lighted on in the monastery. Oh! how welcome to Luther, in this dry and parched land, this well of water, whereat he that drinketh, as said the great Teacher, “shall never thirst.” This Bible he could not take with him to his cell and there read and study it, for it was chained in the chapel of the convent; but he could and did go to it, and sometimes he spent whole days in meditation upon a single verse or word. It was now that he betook him to the study of the original tongues, that being able to read the Scriptures in the languages in which they were at first written, he might see deeper into their meaning. Reuchlin’s Hebrew Lexicon had recently appeared, and with this and other helps he made rapid progress in the knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek.⁴ In the ardour of this pursuit he would forget for weeks together to repeat the daily prayers. His conscience would smite him for transgressing the rules of his order, and he would neither eat nor sleep till the omitted services had been performed, and all arrears discharged. It once happened that for seven weeks he scarcely closed his eyes.⁵

[238] The communicative and jovial student was now changed into the taciturn solitary. The person as well as the manners of Luther had undergone a transformation. What with the drudgery of the day, the studies of the night, the meager meals he allowed himself - “a little bread and a small herring were often his only food”⁶ - the fasts and macerations he practiced, he was more like a corpse than a living man. The fire within was still consuming him. He fell sometimes on the floor of his cell in sheer weakness. “One morning, the door of his cell not being opened as usual, the brethren became alarmed. They knocked: there was no reply. The door was burst in, and poor Fra Martin was found stretched on the ground in a state of ecstasy, scarcely breathing, well-nigh dead. A monk took his flute, and gently playing upon it one of the airs that Luther loved, brought him gradually back to himself.”⁷ The likelihood at that moment was that instead of living to do battle with the Pope, and pull down the pillars of his kingdom, a quiet grave, somewhere in the precincts of

⁴Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, p. 19.

⁵D’Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol 1, p. 168. Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 8. Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, p. 21.

⁶“Exiguo pane et halece contentum esse.” (Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 8.)

⁷Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, p. 21.

the monastery, would ere long be the only memorial remaining to testify that such a one as Martin Luther had ever existed.

It was indeed a bitter cup that Luther was now drinking, but it could by no means pass from him. He must drink yet deeper, he must drain it to its dregs. Those works which he did in such bondage of spirit were the price with which he thought to buy pardon. The poor monk came again and again with this goodly sum to the door of heaven, only to find it closed. Was it not enough? "I shall make it more," thought Luther. He goes back, resumes his sweat of soul, and in a little returns with a richer price in his hand. He is again rejected. Alas, the poor monk! What shall he do? He can think but of longer fasts, of severer penances, of more numerous prayers. He returns a third time. Surely he will now be admitted? Alas, no! the sum is yet too small; the door is still shut; justice demands a still larger price. He returns again and again, and always with a bigger sum in his hand; but the door is not opened. God is teaching him that heaven is not to be bought by any sum, however great: that eternal life is the free gift of God. "I was indeed a pious monk," wrote he to Duke George of Saxony, at a future period of his life, "and followed the rules of my order more strictly than I can express. If ever monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it. Of this all the friars who have known me can testify. If I had continued much longer I should have carried my mortifications even to death, by means of my watchings, prayers, readings, and other labours."⁸

But the hour was not yet come when Luther was to enjoy peace. Christ and the redemption He had wrought were not yet revealed to him, and till these had been made known Luther was to find no rest. His anguish continued, nay, increased, and his aspect was now enough to have moved to pity his bitterest enemy. Like a shadow he glided from cell to cell of his monastery; his eyes sunk, his bones protruding, his figure bowed down to the earth; on his brow the shadows of those fierce tempests that were raging in his soul; his tears watering the stony floor, and his bitter cries and deep groans echoing through the long galleries of the convent, a mystery and a terror to the other monks. He tried to disburden his soul to his

⁸Luther's Works, 19. 2299.

confessor, an aged monk. He had had no experience of such a case before; it was beyond his skill; the wound was too deep for him to heal. “‘Save me in thy righteousness’ - what does that mean?” asked Luther. “I can see how God can condemn me in his righteousness, but how can he save me in his righteousness?” But that question his father confessor could not

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answer.

It was well that Luther neither despaired nor abandoned the pursuit as hopeless. He persevered in reading Augustine, and yet more in studying the chained Bible; and it cannot be but that some rays must have broken in through his darkness. Why was it that he could not obtain peace? This question he could not but put to himself - “What rule of my order have I neglected - or if in aught I have come short, have not penance and tears wiped out the fault? And yet my conscience tells me that my sin is not pardoned. Why is this? Are these rules after all only the empirical devices of man? Is there no holiness in those works which I am toiling to perform, and those mortifications to which I am submitting? Is it a change of garment only or a change of heart that I need?” Into this train the monk’s thoughts could scarce avoid falling. And meanwhile he persevered in the use of those means which have the promise connected with them - “Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” “If thou criest after wisdom, if thou liftest up thy voice for understanding, then shalt thou find the fear of the Lord, and understand the knowledge of thy God.”

It is not Luther alone whose cries we hear. Christendom is groaning in Luther, and travailing in pain to be delivered. The cry of those many captives, in all the lands of Christendom, lying in fetters, goes up in the cry of this captive, and has entered into the ears of the Great Ruler: already a deliverer is on the road. As Luther, hour by hour, is sinking in the abyss, nearer, hour by hour, are heard the approaching footsteps of the man who is to aid him in breaking the bars of his own and the world’s prison.

Chapter 4: Luther the Monk Becomes Luther the Reformer

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Staupitz—Visits the Convent at Erfurt—Meets
Luther—Conversations between the Vicar-General and the
Monk—The Cross—Repentance—A Free Salvation—The Dawn
Begins—The Night Returns—An Old Monk—“The Forgiveness of
Sins”—Luther’s Full Emancipation—A Rehearsal—Christendom’s
Burden—How Delivered

Picture: Luther Entering the Augustinian Convent

Picture: The Ordination of Luther to the Priesthood

As in the darkest night a star will at times look forth, all the lovelier that it shines out amidst the clouds of tempest, so there appeared at intervals, during the long and dark night of Christendom, a few men of eminent piety in the Church of Rome. Taught of the Spirit, they trusted not in the Church, but in Christ alone, for salvation; and amid the darkness that surrounded them they saw the light, and followed it. One of these men was John Staupitz.

Staupitz was Vicar-General of the Augustines of Germany. He knew the way of salvation, having learned it from the study of Augustine and the Bible. He saw and acknowledged the errors and vices of the age, and deplored the devastation they were inflicting on the Church. The purity of his own life condemned the corruptions around him, but he lacked the courage to be the Reformer of Christendom. Nevertheless, God honoured him by making him signally serviceable to the man who was destined to be that Reformer.¹

It chanced to the Vicar-General to be at this time on a tour of visitation among the convents of the Augustinians in Germany, and the path he had traced for himself led him to that very monastery within whose walls the sore struggle we have described was going on. Staupitz came to Erfurt. His eye, trained to read the faces on which it fell, lighted on the young monk. The first glance awoke his interest

¹D’Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol. 1, bk 2, chap. 4, Adam, Vita Staupizii.

in him. He marked the brow on which he thought he could see the shadow of some great sorrow, the eye that spoke of the anguish within, the frame worn to almost a skeleton by the wrestlings of the spirit; the whole man so meek, so chastened, so bowed down; and yet about him withal an air of resolution not yet altogether vanquished, and of strength not yet wholly dried up. Staupitz himself had tasted the cup of which Luther was now drinking. He had been in trouble of soul, although, to use the language of the Bible, he had but "run with the footmen," while Luther was contending "with horses." His own experience enabled him to guess at the inner history of the monk who now stood before him.

The Vicar-General called the monk to him, spoke words of kindness - accents now become strange to Luther, for the inmates of his monastery could account for his conflicts only by believing him possessed of the Evil One - and by degrees he won his confidence. Luther felt that there was a mysterious influence in the words of Staupitz, which penetrated his soul, and was already exerting a soothing and mitigating effect upon his trouble. In the Vicar-General the monk met the first man who really understood his case.

They conversed together in the secrecy of the monastic cell. Luther laid open his whole soul; he concealed nothing from the Vicar-General. He told him all his temptations, all his horrible thoughts - his vows a thousand times repeated and as often broken; how he shrank from the sight of his own vileness, and how he trembled when he thought of the holiness of God. It was not the sweet promise of mercy, but the fiery threatening of the law, on which he dwelt. "Who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?"

The wise Staupitz saw how it was. The monk was standing in the presence of the Great Judge without a days-man. He was dwelling with Devouring Fire; he was transacting with God just as he would have done if no cross had ever been set up on Calvary, and no "place for repentance." "Why do you torture yourself with these thoughts? Look at the wounds of Christ," said Staupitz, anxious to turn away the monk's eye from his own wounds - his stripes, macerations, fastings - by which he hoped to move God to pity. "Look at the blood Christ shed for you," continued his skillful counsellor; "it is there the grace of God will appear to you."

“I cannot and dare not come to God,” replied Luther, in effect, “till I am a better man; I have not yet repented sufficiently.” “A better man!” would the Vicar-General say in effect; “Christ came to save not good men, but sinners. Love God, and you will have repented; there is no real repentance that does not begin in the love of God; and there is no love to God that does not take its rise in all apprehension of that mercy which offers to sinners freedom from sin through the blood of Christ.” “Faith in the mercies of God! This is the star that goeth before the face of Repentance, the pillar of fire that guideth her in the night of her sorrows, and giveth her light,”² and showeth her the way to the throne of God. [240]

These were wise words, and “the words of the wise are as nails, and as goads fastened in a sure place by the master of assemblies.” So was it with the words of the Vicar-General; a light from heaven accompanied them, and shone into the understanding of Luther. He felt that a healing balm had touched his wound, that a refreshing oil had been poured upon his bruised spirit. Before leaving him, the Vicar-General made him the present of a Bible, which Luther received with unbounded joy; and most sacredly did he obey the parting injunction of Staupitz: “Let the study of the Scriptures be your favorite occupation.”³

But the change in Luther was not yet complete. It is hard to enter into life - to cast out of the heart that distrust and fear of God with which sin has filled it, and take in the grand yet true idea of God’s infinite love, and absolutely free and boundless mercy.

Luther’s faith was as yet but as a grain of mustard-seed. After Staupitz had taken leave of him he again turned his eye from the Savior to himself; the clouds of despondency and fear that instant gathered; and his old conflicts, though not with the same violence, were renewed. He fell ill, and in his sore sickness he lay at the gates of death. It pleased God on this bed, and by a very humble instrument, to complete the change which the Vicar-General had commenced. An aged brother-monk who, as Luther afterwards said, was doubtless a true Christian though he wore “the cowl of damnation,” came to his bedside, and began to recite with much [241]

²Bishop King, Lectures on Jonah, delivered at York, 1594, p. 484; Lond., 1618.

³D Aubigue, Hist. Reform., vol 1, pp. 170 - 180.

simplicity and earnestness the Apostle's Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Luther repeated after him in feeble accents, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." "Nay," said the monk, "you are to believe not merely in the forgiveness of David's sins, and of Peter's sins; you must believe in the forgiveness of your own sins."⁴ The decisive words had been spoken. A ray of light had penetrated the darkness that encompassed Luther. He saw it all: the whole Gospel in a single phrase, the forgiveness of sins - not the payment, but the forgiveness.

In that hour the principle of Popery in Luther's soul fell. He no longer looked to himself and to the Church for salvation. He saw that God had freely forgiven him in His Son Jesus Christ. His prison doors stood open. He was in a new world. God had loosed his sackcloth and girded him with gladness. The healing of his spirit brought health to his body; and in a little while he rose from that bed of sickness, which had so nearly been to him the bed of death. The gates of destruction were, in God's marvelous mercy, changed into the gates of Paradise.

[242] The battle which Luther fought in this cell was in reality a more sublime one than that which he afterwards had to fight before the Diet of the Empire at Worms. Here there is no crowd looking on, no dramatic lights fall upon the scene, the conflict passes in the obscurity of a cell; but all the elements of the morally sublime are present. At Worms, Luther stood before the powers and principalities of earth, who could but kill the body, and had no more that they could do. Here he meets the powers and principalities of darkness, and engages in a struggle, the issue of which is to him eternal life or eternal death. And he triumphs! This cell was the cradle of a new life to Luther, and a new life to Christendom. But before it could be the cradle of a new life it had first to become a grave. Luther had here to struggle not only to tears and groans: he had to struggle unto death. "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." So did the Spirit of God inspire Paul to announce what is a universal law. In every case death must precede a new life. The new life of the Church at the beginning of the Christian era came from a grave, the sepulcher of Christ. Before we ourselves can put

⁴Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 10.

on immortality we must die and be buried. In this cell at Erfurt died Martin Luther the monk, and in this cell was born Martin Luther the Christian, and the birth of Luther the Christian was the birth of the Reformation in Germany.⁵

Let us pause here, and notice how the Reformation rehearsed itself first of all in the cell at Erfurt, and in the soul of Luther, before coming forth to display its power on the public stage of Germany and of Christendom.

The finger of God touched the human conscience, and the mightiest of all forces awoke. The Reformation's birth-place was not the cabinet of kings, nor the closet of philosophers and scholars: it had its beginnings in the depths of the spiritual world - in the inextinguishable needs and longings of the human soul, quickened, after a long sleep, by divinely ordained instrumentalities.

For ages the soul of man had "groaned, being burdened." That burden was the consciousness of sin. The method taken to be rid of that burden was not the forgiveness, but the payment of sin. A Church arose which, although retaining "the forgiveness of sins" as an article in her creed, had discarded it from her practice; or rather, she had substituted her own "forgiveness of sins" for God's.

The Gospel came to men in the beginning preaching a free pardon. To offer forgiveness on any other terms would have been to close heaven while professing to open it. But the Church of Rome turned the eyes of men from the salvation of the Gospel, to a salvation of which she assumed to be the exclusive and privileged owner. That on which the Gospel had put no price, knowing that to put upon it the smallest price was wholly to withhold it, the Church put a very great price. Salvation was made a marketable commodity; it was put up for sale, and whoever wished to possess it had to pay the price which the Church had put upon it. Some paid the price in good works, some paid it in austerities and penances, and some in money. Each paid in the coin that most suited his taste, or convenience, or ability; but all had to pay. Christendom, in process of time, was covered with a vast apparatus for carrying

⁵The author visited Erfurt in the summer of 1871, and may be permitted here to give his reminiscences of the Augustinian convent and the cell of Luther. Erfurt is a thriving town; its size and importance are notified to the traveler by the number and elegance of its steeples and

on this spiritual traffic. An order of men was established, through whose hands exclusively this ghostly merchandise passed. Over and above the great central emporium of this traffic, which was opened on the Seven Hills, hundreds and thousands of inferior marts were established all over Christendom. Cloisters and convents arose for those who chose to pay in penances; temples and churches were built for those who chose to pay in prayers and masses; and privileged shrines and confessional-boxes for those who preferred paying in money. One half of Christendom reveled in sin because they were wealthy, and the other half groaned under self-inflicted mortifications because they were poor. When at length the principle of a salvation purchased from the Church had come to its full height, it fell.

[243] But Christendom did not deliver itself on the principle of payment. It was not by remaining the bondsman of the Church, and toiling in its service of penances and works of merit, that it wrought out its emancipation. It found that this road would never lead to liberty. Its burden, age after age, was growing but the heavier. Its case had become hopeless, when the sound of the old Gospel, like the silver trumpets of the Day of Jubilee, broke upon its ear: it listened: it cast off the yoke of ceremonies: it turned from man's pardon to God's; from the Church to Christ; from the penance of the cell to the sacrifice of the Cross. Its emancipation was accomplished.

Chapter 5: Luther as Priest, Professor, and Preacher

Ordained as a Priest—Wittenberg University—Luther made Professor—Lectures on the Bible—Popularity—Concourse of Students—Luther Preaches at Wittenberg—A Wooden Church—The Audience—The Impression—The Gospel Resumes its March—Who shall Stop it?

Luther had been two years in the monastery, when on Sunday, 2nd May, 1507, he was ordained to the priesthood. The act was performed by Jerome, Bishop of Brandenburg. John Luther, his father, was present, attended by twenty horsemen, Martin's old comrades, and bringing to his son a present of twenty guilders. The earliest letter extant of Luther is one of invitation to John Braun, Vicar of Eisenach. It gives a fine picture of the feelings with which Luther entered upon his new office. "Since the glorious God," said he, "holy in all his works, has deigned to exalt me, who am a wretched man and every way an unworthy sinner, so eminently, and to call me to his sublime ministry by his sole and most liberal mercy, may I be grateful for the magnificence of such Divine goodness (as far at least as dust and ashes may) and duly discharge the office committed to me." ¹

In the Protestant Churches, the office into which ordination admits one is that of ministry; in the Church of Rome, in which Luther received ordination, it is that of priesthood. The Bishop of Brandenburg, when he ordained Luther, placed the chalice in his hand, accompanying the action with the words, "Receive thou the power of sacrificing for the quick and the dead." ² It is one of the fundamental tenets of Protestantism that to offer sacrifice is the prerogative of Christ alone, and that, since the coming of this "one Priest," and the offering of His "one sacrifice," sacrificing priesthood

¹Worsley, *Life of Mart. Luth.*, vol. 1, p. 53; Lond., 1856.

²Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 8, p. 19.

is for ever abolished. Luther did not see this then; but the recollection of the words addressed to him by the bishop appalled him in after years. "If the earth did not open and swallow us both up," said he, "it was owing to the great patience and long-suffering of the Lord."

Luther passed another year in his cell, and left it in haste at last, as Joseph his prison, being summoned to fill a wider sphere. The University of Wittemberg was founded in 1502 by Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony. He wished, as he said in its charter, to make it the light of his kingdom. He little dreamed what a fulfillment awaited his wish. The elector was looking round him for fit men for its chairs. Staupitz, whose sagacity and honorable character gave him great weight with Frederick, recommended the Augustinian monk at Erfurt. The electoral invitation was immediately dispatched to Luther, and accepted by him. And now we behold him, disciplined by God, rich in the experience of himself, and illumined with the knowledge of the Gospel, bidding the monastery a final adieu, though not as yet the cowl, and going forth to teach in the newly-founded University of Wittemberg. ³

[244] The department assigned to Luther was "dialectics and physics" - in other words, the scholastic philosophy. There was a day - it had not long gone by - when Luther reveled in this philosophy, and deemed it the perfection of all wisdom. He had since tasted the "old wine" of the apostles, and had lost all relish for the "new wine" of the schoolmen. Much he longed to unseal the fountains of the Water of Life to his students. Nevertheless, he set about doing the work prescribed to him, and his labours in this ungenial field were of great use, in the way of completing his own preparation for combating and overthrowing the Aristotelian philosophy - one of the idols of the age.

Soon "philosophy" was exchanged for "theology," as the department of the new professor. It was now that Luther was in his right place. He opened the New Testament; he selected for exposition the Epistle to the Romans ⁴ - that book which shines like a glorious constellation in the firmament of the Bible, gathering as it does into one group all the great themes of revelation.

³Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 8, p. 18. Lipsiae, 1694.

⁴Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 13.

Passing from the cell to the class-room with the open Bible in his hand, the professor spoke as no teacher had spoken for ages in Christendom. ⁵ It was no rhetorician, showing what a master of his art he was; it was no dialectician, proud to display the dexterity of his logic, or the cunning of his sophistry; it was no philosopher, expounding with an air of superior wisdom the latest invention of the schools; Luther spoke like one who had come from another sphere. And he had indeed been carried upwards, or, to speak with greater accuracy, he had, more truly than the great poet of the *Inferno*, gone down into Hades, and at the cost of tears, and groans, and agonies of soul he had learned what he was now communicating so freely to others. Herein lay the secret of Luther's power. The youths crowded round him; their numbers increased day by day; professors and rectors sat at his feet; the fame of the university went forth to other lands, and students flocked from foreign countries to hear the wisdom of the Wittenberg professor. The living waters shut up so long were again let loose, and were flowing among the habitations of men, and promised to convert the dry and parched wilderness which Christendom had become into the garden of the Lord.

“This monk,” said Dr. Mallerstadt, the rector of the university, himself a man of great learning and fame, “will reform the whole Church. He builds on the prophets and apostles, which neither Scotist nor Thomist can overthrow.” ⁶

Staupitz watched the career of the young professor with peculiar and lively satisfaction. He was even now planning a yet wider usefulness for him. Why, thought Staupitz, should Luther confine his light within the walls of the university? Around him in Wittenberg, and in all the towns of Germany, are multitudes who are as sheep without a shepherd, seeking to satisfy their hunger with the husks on which the monks feed them; why not minister to these men also the Bread of Life? The Vicar-General proposed to Luther that he should preach in public. He shrank back from so august an office - so weighty a responsibility. “In less than six months,” said Luther, “I shall be in my grave.” But Staupitz knew the monk better than he knew himself; he continued to urge his proposal, and at last Luther

⁵His lecture-hour was one o'clock. It should have been six in the morning, but was changed ob commoditatem. (Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, p. 19.)

⁶Melch. Adam, *Vita Luth.*, p. 104. Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 8, p. 19.

consented. We have followed him from the cell to the professor's chair, now we are to follow him from the chair to the pulpit.

Luther opened his public ministry in no proud cathedral, but in one of the humblest sanctuaries in all Germany. In the center of the public square stood an old wooden church, thirty feet long and twenty broad. Far from magnificent in even its best days, it was now sorely decayed. Tottering to its fall, it needed to be propped up on all sides. In this chapel was a pulpit of boards raised three feet over the level of the floor. This was the place assigned to the young preacher. In this shed, and from this rude pulpit, was the Gospel proclaimed to the common people for the first time after the silence of centuries.

“This building,” says Myconius, “may well be compared to the stable in which Christ was born. It was in this wretched enclosure that God willed, so to speak, that his well-beloved Son should be born a second time. Among those thousands of cathedrals and parish churches with which the world is filled, there was not one at that time which God chose for the glorious preaching of eternal life.”⁷

If his learning and subtlety fitted Luther to shine in the university, not less did his powers of popular eloquence enable him to command the attention of his countrymen. Before his day the pulpit had sunk ineffably low. At that time not a secular priest in all Italy ever entered a pulpit.⁸ Preaching was wholly abandoned to the Mendicant friars. These persons knew neither human nor Divine knowledge. To retain their hearers they were under the necessity of amusing them. This was not difficult, for the audience was as little critical as the preacher was fastidious. Gibes - the coarser, the more effective; legends and tales - the more wonderful and incredible, the more attentively [245] listened to; the lives and miracles of the saints were the staple of the sermons of the age. Dante has immortalized these productions, and the truth of his descriptions is attested by the representations of such scenes which have come clown to us in the sculpture-work of the cathedrals.⁹ But the preacher who now appeared in the humble

⁷Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 8, p. 17.

⁸Ruchat, *Hist. de la Reformation de la Suisse*, tom. 5, p. 192; Lausanne, 1836.

⁹“On the chapters of the great pillars of the church at Strasburg there is a procession represented in which a hog carrieth the pot with the holy water, and asses and hogs in priestly vestments follow to make up the procession. There is also an ass standing before an altar, as if he were going to consecrate, and one carrieth a case with relics in which

pulpit of the wooden chapel of Wittemberg spoke with authority, and not as the friars. His animated face, his kindling eye, his thrilling tones - above all, the majesty of the truths which he announced - captivated the hearts and awed the consciences of his hearers. He proclaimed pardon and heaven, not as indirect gifts through priests, but as direct from God. Men wondered at these tidings - so new, so strange, and yet so refreshing and welcome. It was evident, to use the language of Melancthon, that "his words had their birth-place not on his lips, but in his soul."¹⁰

His fame as a preacher grew. From the surrounding cities came crowds to hear him. The timbers of the old edifice creaked under the multitude of listeners. It was far too small to accommodate the numbers that flocked to it.

The Town Council of Wittemberg now elected him to be their preacher, and gave him the use of the parish church. On one occasion the Elector Frederick was among his hearers, and expressed his admiration of the simplicity and force of his language, and the copiousness and weight of his matter. In presence of this larger audience his eloquence burst forth in new power. Still wider shone the light, and more numerous every day were the eyes that turned towards the spot where it was rising. The Reformation was now fairly launched on its path. God had bidden it go onwards, and man would be unable to stop it. Popes and emperors and mighty armies would throw themselves upon it; scaffolds and stakes would be raised to oppose it: over all would it march in triumph, and at last ascend the throne of the world. Emerging from this lowly shed in the square of Wittemberg, as emerges the sun from the mists of earth, it would rise ever higher and shine ever brighter, till at length Truth, like a glorious noon, would shed its beams from pole to pole.

one seeth a fox; and the trains of all that go in this procession are carried by monkeys." (Misson, *New Voyage to Italy*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 506; Lond., 1739.)

¹⁰"Non in labris nasci, sed in pectore." (Vita Mart. Luth., p. 13.)

Chapter 6: Luther's Journey to Rome

A Quarrel—Luther Deputed to Arrange it—Sets out for Rome—His Dreams—Italian Monasteries—Their Luxuriousness—A Hint—His Illness at Bologna—A Voice—“The Just shall Live by Faith”—Florence—Beauty of Site and Buildings—The Renaissance—Savonarola—Campagna di Roma—Luther's First Sight of Rome

Picture: Luther Preaching in the Old Wooden Church at Wittenberg
 Picture: View of Bologna

It was necessary that Luther should pause a little while in the midst of his labours. He had been working for some time under high pressure, and neither mind nor body would long have endured the strain. It is in seasons of rest and reflection that the soul realizes its growth and makes a new start. Besides, Luther needed one lesson more in order to his full training as the future Reformer, and that lesson he could receive only in a foreign land. In his cell at Erfurt he had been shown the sinfulness of his own heart, and his helplessness as a lost sinner. This must be the foundation of his training. At Rome he must be shown the vileness of that Church which he still regarded as the Church of Christ and the abode of holiness.

[247] As often happens, a very trivial matter led to what resulted in the highest consequences both to Luther himself and to Christendom. A quarrel broke out between seven monasteries of the Augustines and their Vicar-General. It was agreed to submit the matter to the Pope, and the sagacity and eloquence of Luther recommended him as the fittest person to undertake the task. This was in the year 1510, or, according to others, 1512. ¹ We now behold the young monk setting out for the metropolis of Christendom. We may well believe that

¹Mathesius and Seckendorf place it in 1510, Melancthon in 1512. Some mention two journeys. Luther himself speaks of only one. His object in going to Rome has also been variously stated. The author has followed the oldest authorities, who are likely to be also the best informed. Luther's errand is a matter of small moment; the great fact is that he did visit Rome.

his pulse beat quicker as every step brought him nearer the Eternal City, illustrious as the abode of the Caesars; still more illustrious as the abode of the Popes. To Luther, Rome was a type of the Holy of Holies. There stood the throne of God's Vicar. There resided the Oracle of Infallibility. There dwelt the consecrated priests and ministers of the Lord. Thither went up, year by year, armies of devout pilgrims, and tribes of holy anchorites and monks, to pay their vows in her temples, and prostrate themselves at the footstool of the apostles. Luther's heart swelled with no common emotion when he thought that his feet would stand within the gates of this thrice-holy city.

Alas, what a terrible disenchantment awaited the monk at the end of his journey; or rather, what a happy emancipation from an enfeebling and noxious illusion! For so long as this spell was upon him, Luther must remain the captive of that power which had imprisoned truth and enchained the nations. An arm with a fetter upon it was not the arm to strike such blows as would emancipate Christendom. He must see Rome, not as his dreams had painted her, but as her own corruptions had made her. And he must go thither to see her with his own eyes, for he would not have believed her deformity although another had told him; and the more profound the idolatrous reverence with which he approaches her, the more resolute his purpose, when he shall have re-crossed her threshold, to leave of that tyrannical and impious power not one stone upon another. [248]

Luther crossed the Alps and descended on the fertile plains of Lombardy. Those magnificent highways which now conduct the traveller with so much ease and pleasure through the snows and rocks that form the northern wall of Italy did not then exist, and Luther would scale this rampart by narrow, rugged, and dangerous tracks. The sublimity that met his eye and regaled him on his journey had, doubtless, an elevating and expanding effect upon his mind, and mingled something of Italian ideality with his Teutonic robustness. To him, as to others, what a charm in the rapid transition from the homeliness of the German plains, and the ruggedness of the Alps, to the brilliant sky, the voluptuous air, and the earth teeming with flowers and fruits, which met his gaze when he had accomplished his descent!

Weary with his journey, he entered a monastery situated on the banks of the Po, to refresh himself a few days. The splendor of the establishment struck him with wonder. Its yearly revenue, amounting to the enormous sum of thirty-six thousand ducats,² was all expended in feeding, clothing, and lodging the monks. The apartments were sumptuous in the extreme. They were lined with marble, adorned with paintings, and filled with rich furniture. Equally luxurious and delicate was the clothing of the monks.

Silks and velvet mostly formed their attire; and every day they sat down at a table loaded with exquisite and skillfully cooked dishes. The monk who, in his native Germany, had inhabited a bare cell, and whose day's provision was at times only a herring and a small piece of bread, was astonished, but said nothing.

Friday came, and on Friday the Church has forbidden the faithful to taste flesh. The table of the monks groaned under the same abundance as before. As on other days, so on this there were dishes of meat. Luther could no longer refrain. "On this day," said Luther, "such things may not be eaten. The Pope has forbidden them." The monks opened their eyes in astonishment on the rude German. Verily, thought they, his boldness is great. It did not spoil their appetite, but they began to be apprehensive that the German might report their manner of life at head-quarters, and they consulted together how this danger might be obviated. The porter, a humane man, dropped a hint to Luther of the risk he would incur should he make a longer stay. Profiting by the friendly counsel to depart hence while health served him, he took leave, with as little delay as possible, of the monastery and all in it.

Again setting forth, and traveling on foot, he came to Bologna, "the throne of the Roman law." In this city Luther fell ill, and his sickness was so sore that it threatened to be unto death. To sickness was added the melancholy natural to one who is to find his grave in a foreign land. The Judgment Seat was in view, and alarm filled his soul at the prospect of appearing before God. In short, the old anguish and terror, though in moderated force, returned. As he waited for death he thought he heard a voice crying to him and

²D'Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol. 1, p. 190. Luth. Opp. (W) 22. 1468.

saying, "The just shall live by faith."³ It seemed as if the voice spoke to him from heaven, so vivid was the impression it made. This was the second time this passage of Scripture had been borne into his mind, as if one had spoken it to him. In his chair at Wittenberg, while lecturing from the Epistle to the Romans, he had come to these same words, "The just shall live by faith." They laid hold upon him so that he was forced to pause and ponder over them. What do they mean? What can they mean but that the just have a new life, and that this new life springs from faith? But faith on whom, and on what? On whom but on Christ, and on what but the righteousness of Christ wrought out in the poor sinner's behalf? If that be so, pardon and eternal life are not of works but of faith: they are the free gift of God to the sinner for Christ's sake.

So had Luther reasoned when these words first arrested him, and so did he again reason in his sick-chamber at Bologna. They were a needful admonition, approaching as he now was a city where endless rites and ceremonies had been invented to enable men to live by works. His sickness and anguish threw him back upon the first elements of life, and the one only source of holiness. He was taught that this holiness is restricted to no soil, to no system, to no rite; it springs up in the heart where faith dwells. Its source was not at Rome, but in the Bible; its bestower was not the Pope, but the Holy Spirit.

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"The just shall live by faith." As he stood at the gates of death a light seemed, at these words, to spring up around him. He arose from his bed healed in body as in soul. He resumed his journey. He traversed the Apennines, experiencing doubtless, after his sickness, the restorative power of their healthful breezes, and the fragrance of their dells gay with the blossoms of early summer. The chain crossed, he descended into that delicious valley where Florence, watered by the Arno, and embosomed by olive and cypress groves, reposes under a sky where light lends beauty to every object on which it falls. Here Luther made his next resting-place.⁴

The "Etrurian Athens," as Florence has been named, was then in its first glory. Its many sumptuous edifices were of recent erection,

³D'Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol. 1, pp. 190, 191.

⁴Worsley, *Life of Luther*, vol 1, p. 60. Michelet, *Life of Luther*, p. 15; Lond., 1846.

and their pristine freshness and beauty were still upon them. Already Brunelleschi had hung his dome - the largest in the world - in mid-air; already Giotto had raised his Campanile, making it, by its great height, its elegant form, and the richness of its variously-colored marbles, the characteristic feature of the city. Already the Baptistry had been built, with its bronze doors which Michael Angelo declared to be "worthy of being the gates of Paradise." Besides these, other monuments and works of art adorned the city where the future Reformer was now making a brief sojourn. To these creations of genius Luther could not be indifferent, familiar as he had hitherto been with only the comparatively homely architecture of a Northern land. In Germany and England wood was then not unfrequently employed in the construction of dwellings, whereas the Italians built with marble.

Other things were linked with the Etrurian capital, which Luther was scholar enough to appreciate. Florence was the cradle of the Renaissance. The house of Medici had risen to eminence in the previous century. Cosmo, the founder of the family, had amassed immense riches in commerce. Passionately fond of letters and arts, he freely expended his wealth in the munificent patronage of scholars and artists. Lovers of letters from every land were welcomed by him and by his son Lorenzo in his superb villa on the sides of Fiesole, and were entertained with princely hospitality. Scholars from the East, learned men from England and the north of Europe, here met the philosophers and poets of Italy; and as they walked on the terraces, or gathered in groups in the alcoves of the gardens - the city, the Arno, and the olive and cypress-clad vale beneath them - they would prolong their discourse on the new learning and the renovated age which literature was bringing with it, till the shadows fell, and dusk concealed the domes of Florence at their feet, and brought out the stars in the calm azure overhead. Thus the city of the Medici became the center of that intellectual and literary revival which was then radiating over Europe, and which heralded a day of more blessed light than any that philosophy and letters have ever shed. Alas, that to Italy, where this light first broke, the morning should so soon have been turned into the shadow of death!

But Florence had very recently been the scene of events which could not be unknown to Luther, and which must have touched a

deeper chord in his bosom than any its noble edifices and literary glory could possibly awaken. Just fourteen years (1498) before Luther visited this city, Savonarola had been burned on the Piazza della Gran' Ducca, for denouncing the corruptions of the Church, upholding the supreme authority of Scripture, and teaching that men are to be saved, not by good works, but by the expiatory sufferings of Christ. ⁵ These were the very truths Luther had learned in his cell; their light had broken upon him from the page of the Bible; the Spirit, with the iron pen of anguish, had written them on his heart; he had preached them to listening crowds in his wooden chapel at Wittenberg; and on this spot, already marked by a statue of Neptune, had a brother-monk been burned alive for doing the very same thing in Italy which he had done in Saxony. The martyrdom of Savonarola he could not but regard as at once of good and of evil augury. It cheered him, doubtless, to think that in this far-distant land another, by the study of the same book, had come to the same conclusion at which he himself had arrived respecting the way of life, and had been enabled to witness for the truth unto blood. This showed him that the Spirit of God was acting in this land also, that the light was breaking out at various points, and that the day he waited for was not far distant. ⁶

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But the stake of Savonarola might be differently interpreted; it might be construed into a prognostic of many other stakes to be planted hereafter. The death of the Florentine confessor showed that the ancient hatred of the darkness to the light was as bitter as ever, and that the darkness would not abdicate, without a terrible struggle. It was no peaceful scene on which Truth was about to step, and it was not amid the plaudits of the multitude that her progress was to be accomplished. On the contrary, tempest and battle would hang upon her path; every step of advance would be won over frightful

⁵Lechler bears his testimony to the teaching of Savonarola. He says: "Not only is faith the gift and work of God, but also that faith alone justifies without the works of the law. This Savonarola has clearly, roundly, and fully expressed. He has done so in his exposition of the 31st and 51st Psalms, written in prison. And he quotes from Rudelbach the following words in proof: 'Haec fides sola justificat hominem, id est, apud Deum absque operibus legis justum facit'" (Meditationes in Psalmos). - Lechler, vol. 2, p. 542.

⁶"Savonarola," says Rudelbach, "was a prophet of the Reformation." Lechler adds: "and the martyr of his prophecy; a martyr for reform before the Reformation." (Vol. 2, p. 546.)

opposition; she must suffer and bleed before she could reign. These were among the lessons which Luther learned on the spot to which doubtless he often came to muse and pray. ⁷

How many disciples had Savonarola left behind him in the city in which he had poured out his blood? This, doubtless, was another point of anxious inquiry to Luther; but the answer was not encouraging. The zeal of the Florentines had cooled. It was hard to enter into life as Savonarola had entered into it - the gate was too narrow and the road too thorny. They praised him, but they could not imitate him. Florence was not to be the cradle of an evangelical Renaissance. Its climate was voluptuous and its Church was accommodating: so its citizens, who, when the voice of their great preacher stirred them, seemed to be not far from the kingdom of heaven, drew back when brought face to face with the stake, and crouched down beneath the twofold burden of sensuality and superstition.

So far Luther had failed to discover that sanctity which before beginning his journey he had pictured to himself, as springing spontaneously as it were out of this holy soil. The farther he penetrated into this land of Italy, the more was he shocked at the irreverence and impiety which characterized all ranks, especially the "religious." The relaxation of morals was universal. Pride, avarice, luxury, abominable vices, and frightful crimes defiled the land; and, to crown all, "sacred things" were the subjects of contempt and mockery. It seemed as if the genial climate which nourished the fruits of the earth into a luxuriance unknown to his Northern home, nourished with a like luxuriance the appetites of the body and passions of the soul. He sighed for the comparative temperance, frugality, simplicity, and piety of his fatherland.

But he was now near Rome, and Rome, said he to himself, will make amends for all. In that holy city Christianity will be seen in the

⁷The author was shown, in 1864, the Bible of Savonarola, which is preserved in the library of San Lorenzo at Florence. The broad margin of its leaves is written all over in a small elegant hand, that of Savonarola. After his martyrdom his disciples were accustomed to come secretly and kiss the spot where he had been burned. This coming to the knowledge of the reigning duke, Pietro de Medici, he resolved to put an end to a practice that gave him annoyance. He accordingly erected on the spot a statue of Neptune, with a fountain falling into a circular basin of water, and sea-nymphs clustering on the brim. The duke's device has but the more effectually fixed in the knowledge of mankind the martyrdom and the spot where it took place.

spotless beauty of her apostolic youth. In that city there are no monks bravely apparelled in silks and velvets; there are no conventual cells with a luxurious array of couches and damasks, and curious furniture inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl, while their walls are aglow with marbles, paintings, and gilding. There are no priests who tarry by the wine-cup, or sit on fast-days at boards smoking with dishes of meat and venison. The sound of the viol, the lute, and the harp is never heard in the monasteries of Rome: there ascend only the accents of devotion: matins greet the day, and even-song speeds its departure. Into that holy city there entereth nothing that defileth. Eager to mingle in the devout society of the place to which he was hastening, and there forget the sights which had pained him on the way thither, he quitted Florence, and set out on the last stage of his journey.

We see him on his way. He is descending the southern slopes of the mountains on which Viterbo is seated. At every short distance he strains his eyes, if haply he may descry on the bosom of the plain that spreads itself out at his feet, some signs of her who once was "Queen of the Nations." On his right, laving the shore of Latium, is the blue Mediterranean; on his left is the triple-topped Soracte and the "purple Apennine" - white towns hanging on its crest, and olive-woods and forests of pine clothing its sides - running on in a magnificent wall of craggy peaks, till it fades from the eye in the southern horizon. Luther is now traversing the storied Campagna di Roma.

The man who crosses this plain at the present day finds it herbless, silent, and desolate. The multitude of men which it once nourished have perished from its bosom. The numerous and populous towns, that in its better days crowned every conical height that dots its surface, are now buried in its soil: its olive-woods and orange-groves have been swept away, and thistles, wiry grass, and reeds have come in their room. Its roads, once crowded with armies, ambassadors, and proconsuls, are now deserted and all but untrodden. Broken columns protruding through the soil, stacks of brick-work with the marble peeled off, substructions of temples and tombs, now become the lair of the fox or the lurking-place of the brigand, and similar memorials are almost all that remain to testify to the flour-

ishing cultivation, and the many magnificent structures, that once adorned this great plain.

But in the days of Luther the Campagna di Roma had not become the blighted, treeless, devastated expanse it is now. Doubtless many memorials of decay met his eye as he passed along. War had left some frightful scars upon the plain: the indolence and ignorance of its inhabitants had operated with even worse effect: but still in the sixteenth century it had not become so deserted of man, and so forsaken of its cities, as it is at this day.⁸ The land still continued to enjoy what has now all but ceased upon it, seedtime and harvest. Besides, it was the beginning of summer when Luther visited it, and seen under the light of an Italian sun, and with the young verdure clothing its surface, the scene would be by no means an unpleasant one. But one object mainly engrossed his thoughts: he was drawing nigh to the metropolis of Christendom. The heights of Monte Mario, adjoining the Vatican - for the cupola of St. Peter's was not yet built - would be the first to catch his eye; the long ragged line formed by the buildings and towers of the city would next come into view. Luther had had his first sight of her whom no one ever yet saw for the first time without emotion, though it might not be so fervent, nor of the same character exactly, as that which thrilled Luther at this moment. Falling on his knees, he exclaimed, "Holy Rome, I salute thee!"⁹

⁸In proof we appeal to the engravings of Piranesi now nearly 200 years old. These represent the country around Rome as tolerably peopled and cultivated.

⁹Tischreden, 441.

Chapter 7: Luther in Rome

Enchantment—Ruins—Holy Places—Rome’s Nazarites—Rome’s Holiness—Luther’s Eyes begin to Open—Pilate’s Stairs—A Voice heard a Third Time—A Key that Opens the Closed Gates of Paradise—What Luther Learned at Rome

Picture: View of Florence

Picture: The Schlosskirk, or Castlechurch, at Wittemberg

After many a weary league, Luther’s feet stand at last within the gates of Rome. What now are his feelings? Is it a Paradise or a Pandemonium in which he is arrived

The enchantment continued for some little while. Luther tried hard to realize the dreams which had lightened his toilsome journey. Here he was breathing holier air, so he strove to persuade himself; here he was mingling with a righteous people; while the Nazarites of the Lord were every moment passing by in their long robes, and the chimes pealed forth all day long, and, not silent even by night, told of the prayers and praises that were continually ascending in the temples of the metropolis of Christendom.

The first things that struck Luther were the physical decay and ruin of the place. Noble palaces and glorious monuments rose on every side of him, but, strangely enough, mingled with these were heaps of rubbish and piles of ruins. These were the remains of the once imperial glory of the city - the spoils of war, the creations of genius, the labours of art which had beautified it in its palmy days. They showed him what Rome had been under her pagan consuls and emperors, and they enabled him to judge how much she owed to her Popes. ¹

Luther gazed with veneration on these defaced and mutilated remains, associated as they were in his mind with the immortal names of the great men whose deeds had thrilled him, and whose writings had instructed him in his native land. Here, too, thought

¹Luth. Opp. (W) 22. 2374, 2377.

[252] Luther, the martyrs had died; on the floor of this stupendous ruin, the Coliseum, had they contended with the lions; on this spot, where now stands the sumptuous temple of St. Peter, and where the Vicar of Christ has erected his throne, were they used "as torches to illumine the darkness of the night." Over this city, too, Paul's feet had walked, and to this city had that letter been sent, and here had it first been opened and read, in which occur the words that had been the means of imparting to him a new life - "The just shall live by faith."

The first weeks which Luther passed in Rome were occupied in visiting the holy places,² and saying mass at the altars of the more holy of its churches. For, although Luther was converted in heart, and rested on the one Mediator, his knowledge was imperfect, and the darkness of his mind still remained in part. The law of life in the soul may not be able all at once to develop into an outward course of liberty, and the ideas may be reformed while the old acts and habits of legal belief may for a time survive. It was not easy for Luther or for Christendom to find its way out of a night of twelve centuries. Even to this hour that night remains brooding over a full half of Europe.

[253] If it was the physical deformities of Rome - the scars which war or barbarism had inflicted - that formed the first stumbling-blocks to Luther, it was not long till he began to see that these outward blemishes were as nothing to the hideous moral and spiritual corruptions that existed beneath the surface. The luxury, lewdness, and impiety that shocked him in the first Italian towns he had entered, and which had attended him in every step of his journey since crossing the Alps, were all repeated in Rome on a scale of seven-fold magnitude. His practice of saying mass at all the more favored churches brought him into daily contact with the priests; he saw them behind the scenes; he heard their talk, and he could not conceal from himself - though the discovery unspeakably shocked and pained him - that these men were simply playing a part, and that in private they held in contempt and treated with mockery the very rites which in public they celebrated with so great a show of devotion. If he was shocked at their profane levity, they on their part were no less astonished at his solemn credulity, and jeered him as a dull German, who had not

²Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 8, p. 19.

genius enough to be a skeptic, nor cunning enough to be a hypocrite - a fossilized specimen, in short, of a fanaticism common enough in the twelfth century, but which it amazed them to find still existing in the sixteenth.

One day Luther was saying mass in one of the churches of Rome with his accustomed solemnity. While he had been saying one mass, the priests at the neighboring altars had sung seven. "Make haste, and send Our Lady back her Son:" such was the horrible scoff with which they reprov'd his delay, as they accounted it. ³ To them "Lady and Son" were worth only the money they brought. But these were the common priests. Surely, thought he, faith and piety still linger among the dignitaries of the Church! How mistaken was even this belief, Luther was soon to discover. One day he chanced to find himself at table with some prelates. Taking the German to be a man of the same easy faith with themselves, they lifted the veil a little too freely. They openly expressed their disbelief in the mysteries of their Church, and shamelessly boasted of their cleverness in deceiving and befooling the people. Instead of the words, "Hoc est meum corpus," etc.

- the words at the utterance of which the bread is changed, as the Church of Rome teaches, into the flesh and blood of Christ - these prelates, as they themselves told him, were accustomed to say, "Panis es, et panis manebis," etc. - Bread thou art, and bread thou wilt remain - and then, said they, we elevate the Host, and the people bow down and worship. Luther was literally horrified: it was as if an abyss had suddenly yawned beneath him. But the horror was salutary; it opened his eyes. Plainly he must renounce belief in Christianity or in Rome. His struggles at Erfurt had but too surely deepened his faith in the first to permit him to cast it off: it was the last, therefore, that must be let go; but as yet it was not Rome in her doctrines and rites, but Rome in her clergy, from which Luther turned away.

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Instead of a city of prayers and alms, of contrite hearts and holy lives, Rome was full of mocking hypocrisy, defiant skepticism, jeering impiety, and shameless revelry. Borgia had lately closed his infamous Pontificate, and the warlike Julius II. was now reigning. A

³Tischreden, 441. Seckendorf, lib. 1, p. 19.

powerful police patrolled the city every night. They were empowered to deal summary justice on offenders, and those whom they caught were hanged at the next post or thrown into the Tiber. But all the vigilance of the patrol could not secure the peace and safety of the streets. Robberies and murders were of nightly occurrence. "If there be a hell," said Luther, "Rome is built over it."⁴

And yet it was at Rome, in the midst of all this darkness, that the light shone fully into the mind of the Reformer, and that the great leading idea, that on which his own life was based, and on which he based the whole of that Reformation which God honoured him to accomplish - the doctrine of justification by faith alone - rose upon him in its full-orbed splendor. We naturally ask, How did this come about? What was there in this city of Popish observances to reveal the reformed faith? Luther was desirous of improving every hour of his stay in Rome, where religious acts done on its holy soil, and at its privileged altars and shrines, had a tenfold degree of merit; accordingly he busied himself in multiplying these, that he might nourish his piety, and return a holier man than he came; for as yet he saw but dimly the sole agency of faith in the justification of the sinner.

One day he went, under the influence of these feelings, to the Church of the Lateran. There is the Scala Sancta, or Holy Stairs, which tradition says Christ descended on retiring from the hall of judgment, where Pilate had passed sentence upon him. These stairs are of marble, and the work of conveying them from Jerusalem to Rome was reported to have been undertaken and executed by the angels, who have so often rendered similar services to the Church - Our Lady's House at Loretto for example. The stairs so transported were enshrined in the Palace of the Lateran, and every one who climbs them on his knees merits an indulgence of fifteen years for each ascent. Luther, who doubted neither the legend touching the stairs, nor the merit attached by the bulls of the Popes to the act of climbing them, went thither one day to engage in this holy act. He was climbing the steps in the appointed way, on his knees namely, earning at every step a year's indulgence, when he was startled by a sudden voice, which seemed as if it spoke from heaven, and said,

⁴Luth. Opp. (W) 22. 2376.

“The just shall live by faith.” Luther started to his feet in amazement. This was the third time these same words had been conveyed into his mind with such emphasis, that it was as if a voice of thunder had uttered them. It seemed louder than before, and he grasped more fully the great truth which it announced. What folly, thought he, to seek an indulgence from the Church, which can last me but a few years, when God sends me in his Word an indulgence that will last me for ever! ⁵ How idle to toil at these performances, when God is willing to acquit me of all my sins not as so much wages for so much service, but freely, in the way of believing upon his Son! “The just shall live by faith.” ⁶

From this time the doctrine of justification by faith alone - in other words, salvation by free grace - stood out before Luther as the one great comprehensive doctrine of revelation. He held that it was by departing from this doctrine that the Church had fallen into bondage, and had come to groan under penances and works of self-righteousness. In no other way, he believed, could the Church find her way back to truth and liberty than by returning to this doctrine. This was the road to true reformation. This great article of Christianity was in a sense its fundamental article, and henceforward Luther began to proclaim it as eminently the Gospel - the whole Gospel in a single phrase. With relics, with privileged altars, with Pilate’s Stairs, he would have no more to do; this one sentence, “The just shall live by faith,” had more efficacy in it a thousand times over than all the holy treasures that Rome contained. It was the key [255] that unlocked the closed gates of Paradise; it was the star that went before his face, and led him to the throne of a Savior, there to find a free salvation. It needed but to re-ignite that old light in the skies of the Church, and a day, clear as that of apostolic times, would again shine upon her. This was what Luther now proposed doing.

The words in which Luther recorded this purpose are very characteristic. “I, Doctor Martin Luther,” writes he, “unworthy herald of

⁵Luth. Opp. Lat., Praefatio.

⁶These stairs are still in the Lateran, and still retain all the virtue they ever had. When the author was at Rome in 1851, he saw some peasants from Rimini engaged in climbing them. They enlivened their performance with roars of laughter, for it is the devout act, not the devout feeling, that earns the indulgence. A French gentleman and lady with their little daughter were climbing them at the same time, but in more decorous fashion.

the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, confess this article, that faith alone without works justifies before God; and I declare that it shall stand and remain for ever, in despite of the Emperor of the Romans, the Emperor of the Turks, the Emperor of the Tartars, the Emperor of the Persians; in spite of the Pope and all the cardinals, with the bishops, priests, monks, and nuns; in spite of kings, princes, and nobles; and in spite of all the world, and of the devils themselves; and that if they endeavor to fight against this truth they will draw the fires of hell upon their own heads. This is the true and holy Gospel, and the declaration of me, Doctor Martin Luther, according to the teaching of the Holy Ghost. We hold fast to it in the name of God. Amen.”

This was what Luther learned at Rome. Verily, he believed, it was worth his long and toilsome journey thither to learn this one truth. Out of it were to come the life that would revive Christendom, the light that would illuminate it, and the holiness that would purify and adorn it. In that one doctrine lay folded the whole Reformation. “I would not have missed my journey to Rome,” said Luther afterwards, “for a hundred thousand florins.”

When he turned his back on Rome, he turned his face toward the Bible. The Bible henceforward was to be to Luther the true city of God.

Chapter 8: Tetzel Preaches Indulgences

Luther Returns to Wittemberg—His Study of the Bible—Leo X—His Literary Tastes—His Court—A Profitable Fable—The Rebuilding of St. Peter’s—Sale of Indulgences—Archbishop of Mainz—Tetzel—His Character—His Red Cross and Iron Chest—Power of his Indulgences—Extracts from his Sermons—Sale—What the German People Think

Picture: Tetzels Procession

Luther’s stay in Rome did not extend over two weeks, but in that short time he had learned lessons not to be forgotten all his life long. The grace he had looked to find at Rome he had indeed found there, but in the Word of God, not in the throne of the Pope. The latter was a fountain that had ceased to send forth the Water of Life; so, turning from this empty cistern, he went back to Wittemberg and the study of the Scriptures.

The year of his return was 1512. It was yet five years to the breaking out of the Reformation in Germany. These years were spent by Luther in the arduous labours of preacher, professor, and confessor at Wittemberg. A few months after his return he received the degree of Doctor in Divinity,¹ and this was not without its influence upon the mind of the Reformer. On that occasion Luther took an oath upon the Bible to study, propagate, and defend the faith contained in the Holy Scriptures. He looked upon himself henceforward as the sworn knight of the reformed faith. Taking farewell of philosophy, from which in truth he was glad to escape, he turned to the Bible as his life-work. A more assiduous student of it than ever, his acquaintance with it daily grew, his insight into its meaning continually deepened, and thus a beginning was made in Wittemberg and the neighboring parts of Germany, by the evangelical light which he diffused in his sermons, of that great work for which God had

¹Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, pp. 12, 13. Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, p. 21.

destined him.² He had as yet no thought of separating himself from the Roman Church, in which, as he believed, there resided some sort of infallibility. These were the last links of his bondage, and Rome herself was at that moment unwittingly concocting measures to break them, and set free the arm that was to deal the blow from which she should never wholly rise.

[256] We must again turn our eyes upon Rome. The warlike Julius II., who held the tiara at the time of Luther's visit, was now dead, and Leo X. occupied the Vatican. Leo was of the family of the Medici, and he brought to the Papal chair all the tastes and passions which distinguished the Medicean chiefs of the Florentine republic. He was refined in manners, but sensual and voluptuous in heart, he patronized the fine arts, affected a taste for letters, and delighted in pomps and shows. His court was perhaps the most brilliant in Europe.³ No elegance, no amusement, no pleasure was forbidden admission into it. The fact that it was an ecclesiastical court was permitted to be no restraint upon its ample freedom. It was the chosen home of art, of painting, of music, of revels, and of masquerades.

The Pontiff was not in the least burdened with religious beliefs and convictions. To have such was the fashion of neither his house nor his age. His office as Pontiff, it is true, connected him with "a gigantic fable" which had come down from early times; but to have exploded that fable would have been to dissolve the chair in which he sat, and the throne that brought him so much magnificence and power. Leo was, therefore, content to vent his skepticism in the well-known sneer, "What a profitable affair this fable of Christ has been to us!" To this had it come! Christianity was now worked solely as a source of profit to the Popes.⁴

Leo, combining, as we have said, the love of art with that of pleasure, conceived the idea of beautifying Rome. His family had adorned Florence with the noblest edifices. Its glory was spoken of

²Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, p. 23.

³"He played," says Michelet, "the part of the first King of Europe." (*Life of Luther*, chap. 2, p. 19.) Polano, after enumerating his qualities and accomplishments, says that "he would have been a Pope absolutely complete, if with these he had joined some knowledge of things that concern religion." (*Hist. Counc. Trent*, lib. 1, p. 4.)

⁴Paul of Venice says that this Pope labored under two grievous faults: "ignorance of religion, and impiety or atheism" (*ignorantia religionis, et impietate sive atheismo*). - Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 47, p. 190.

in all countries, and men came from afar to gaze upon its monuments. Leo would do for the Eternal City what his ancestors had done for the capital of Etruria. War, and the slovenliness or penury of the Popes had permitted the Church of St. Peter to fall into disrepair. He would clear away the ruinous fabric, and replace it with a pile more glorious than any that Christendom contained. But to execute such a project millions would be needed. Where were they to come from? The shows or entertainments with which Leo had gratified the vanity of his courtiers, and amused the indolence of the Romans, had emptied his exchequer. But the magnificent conception must not be permitted to fall through from want of money. If the earthly treasury of the Pope was empty, his spiritual treasury was full; and there was wealth enough there to rear a temple that would eclipse all existing structures, and be worthy of being the metropolitan church of Christendom. In short, it was resolved to open a special sale of indulgences in all the countries of Europe.⁵ This traffic would enrich all parties. From the Seven Hills would flow a river of spiritual blessing. To Rome would flow back a river of gold.

Arrangements were made for opening this great market (1517). The license to sell in the different countries of Europe was disposed of to the highest bidder, and the price was paid beforehand to the Pontiff. The indulgences in Germany were farmed out to Albert, Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg.⁶ The archbishop was in Germany what Leo X. was in Rome. He loved to see himself surrounded with a brilliant court; he denied himself no pleasure; was profuse in entertainments; never went abroad without a long retinue of servants; and, as a consequence, was greatly in want of money. Besides, he owed to the Pope for his pall - some said, 26,000, others, 30,000 florins.⁷ There could be no harm in diverting a little of the wealth that was about to flow to Rome, into channels that might profit himself. The bargain was struck, and the archbishop sought out a suitable person to perambulate Germany, and preach up the indulgences. He found a man every way suited to his purpose. This was a Dominican monk, named John Diezel, or Tetzel, the son of a

⁵Polano, *Hist. Counc. Trent*, bk. 1, p. 4; Lond., 1629. Sarpi, *Hist. Conc. Trent*, livr. 1, p. 14; Basle, 1738. Sleidan, *Hist. Reform.*, bk. 1; Lond., 1689.

⁶Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 6, p. 12.

⁷Gerdesius, *Hist. Evan. Renov.*, tom. 1, p. 92.

goldsmith of Leipsic. He had filled the odious office of inquisitor, and having added thereto a huckstering trade in indulgences, he had acquired a large experience in that sort of business. He had been convicted of a shameful crime at Innspruck, and sentenced to be put into a sack and drowned; but powerful intercession being made for him, he was reprieved, and lived to help unconsciously in the overthrow of the system that had nourished him. ⁸

[257] Tetzal lacked no quality necessary for success in his scandalous occupation. He had the voice of a town-crier, and the eloquence of a mountebank. This latter quality enabled him to paint in the most glowing colors the marvelous virtues of the wares which he offered for sale. The resources of his invention, the power of his effrontery, and the efficacy of his indulgences were all alike limitless. ⁹

This man made a progress through Germany. The line of the procession as it moved from place to place might be traced at a distance by the great red cross, which was carried by Tetzal himself, and on which were suspended the arms of the Pope. In front of the procession, on a velvet cushion, was borne the Pontiff's bull of grace; in the rear came the mules laden with bales of pardails, to be given, not to those who had penitence in the heart, but to those who had money in the hand.

When the procession approached a town it was announced to the inhabitants that "The Grace of God and of the Holy Father was at their gates." The welcome accorded was commonly such as the extraordinary honour was fitted to draw forth. The gates were opened, and the tall red cross, with all the spiritual riches of which it was the sign, passed in, followed by a long and imposing array of the ecclesiastical and civic authorities, the religious orders, the various trades, and the whole population of the place, which had come out to welcome the great pardonmonger. The procession advanced amid the beating of drums, the waving of flags, the blaze of tapers, and the pealing of bells. ¹⁰

When he entered a city, Tetzal and his company went straight to the cathedral. The crowd pressed in and filled the church. The

⁸Hechtius, *Vita Tezelii*, p. 21. Seckendorf, *Hist. Luth.*, lib. 1, sec. 7, p. 16. Sleidan, bk. 13, p. 273.

⁹Melancthon, *Vita Mart. Luth.*, p. 15.

¹⁰Myconius, *Hist. Reform.*, p. 106. Gerdesius, *Hist. Evan. Renov.*, tom. 1, p. 84.

cross was set up in front of the high altar, a strong iron box was put down beside it, in which the money received for pardons was deposited, and Tetzel, in the garb of the Dominicans, mounting the pulpit began to set forth with stentorian voice the incomparable merit of his wares. He bade the people think what it was that had come to them. Never before in their times, nor in the times of their fathers, had there been a day of privilege like this. Never before had the gates of Paradise been opened so widely. “Press in now: come and buy while the market lasts,” shouted the Dominican; “should that cross be taken down the market will close, heaven will depart, and then you will begin to knock, and to bewail your folly in neglecting to avail yourselves of blessings which shall then have gone beyond your reach.” So in effect did Tetzel harangue the crowd. But his own words have a plainness and vigor which no paraphrase can convey. Let us cull a few specimens from his orations.

“Indulgences are the most precious and the most noble of God’s gifts,” said Tetzel. Then pointing to the red cross, which stood full in view of the multitude, he would exclaim, “This cross has as much efficacy as the very cross of Christ.”¹¹ “Come, and I will give you letters all properly sealed, by which even the sins which you intend to commit may be pardoned.”¹² “I would not change my privileges for those of St. Peter in heaven, for I have saved more souls by my indulgences than the apostle did by his sermons.”¹³ The Dominican knew how to extol his own office as well as the pardons he was so desirous to bestow on those who had money to buy. “But more than this,” said Tetzel, for he had not as yet disclosed the whole wonderful virtues of his merchandise, “indulgences avail not only for the living but for the dead.” So had Boniface VIII. enacted two centuries before; and Tetzel goes on to the particular application of the dogma. “Priest, noble, merchant, wife, youth, maiden, do you not hear your parents and your other friends who are dead, and who cry from the bottom of the abyss: ‘We are suffering horrible torments! A trifling alms would deliver us; you can give it, and you will not’?”¹⁴

¹¹Myconius, *Hist. Reform.*, p. 14; Ten. edit.

¹²Sleidan, *Hist. Reform.*, bk. 13, p. 273.

¹³Gerdesius, *Hist. Evan. Renov.*, tom. 1, p. 82.

¹⁴D’Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol 1, p. 242.

These words, shouted in a voice of thunder by the monk, made the hearers shudder.

“At the very instant,” continues Tetzl, “that the money rattles at the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory, and flies liberated to heaven. ¹⁵ Now you can ransom so many souls, stiff-necked and thoughtless man; with twelve groats you can deliver your father from purgatory, and you are ungrateful enough not to save him! I shall be justified in the Day of Judgment; but you - you will be punished so much the more severely for having neglected so great salvation. I declare to you, though you have but a single coat, you ought to strip it off and sell it, in order to obtain this grace... The Lord our God no longer reigns, he has resigned all power to the Pope.”

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No argument was spared by the monk which could prevail with the people to receive his pardons; in other words, to fill his iron box. From the fires of purgatory - dreadful realities to men of that age, for even Luther as yet believed in such a place - Tetzl would pass to the ruinous condition of St. Peter's, and draw an affecting picture of the exposure to the rain and hail of the bodies of the two apostles, Peter and Paul, and the other martyrs buried within its precincts. ¹⁶ Pausing, he would launch a sudden anathema at all who despised the grace which the Pope and himself were offering to men; and then, changing to a more meek and pious strain, he would wind up with a quotation from Scripture, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you that many prophets have desired to see those things that ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things that ye hear, and have not heard them.” ¹⁷ And having made an end, the monk would rush down the pulpit stairs and throw a piece of money into the box, which, as if the rattle of the coin were infectious, was sure to be followed by a torrent of pieces.

All round the church were erected confessional stalls. The shrift was a short one, as if intended only to afford another opportunity to the penancer of impressing anew upon the penitent the importance of the indulgences. From confession the person passed to the

¹⁵Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 6, pp. 12 - 17

¹⁶Alberti Moguntini *Summaria Instructio Sub-Commissariorum in Causa Indulgentia.* (Gerdesius, tom. 1, App. No. 9, p. 83.)

¹⁷D'Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol. 1, pp. 241 - 243.

counter behind which stood Tetzel. He sharply scrutinized all who approached him, that he might guess at their rank in life, and apportion accordingly the sum to be exacted. From kings and princes twenty-five ducats were demanded for an ordinary indulgence; from abbots and barons, ten; from those who had an income of five hundred florins, six; and from those who had only two hundred, one. ¹⁸ For particular sins there was a special schedule of prices. Polygamy cost six ducats; church robbery and perjury, nine; murder, eight; and witchcraft, two. Samson, who carried on the same trade in Switzerland as Tetzel in Germany, charged for parricide or fratricide one ducat. The same hand that gave the pardon could not receive the money. The penitent himself must drop it into the box. There were three keys for the box. Tetzel kept one, another was in the possession of the cashier of the house of Fugger in Augsburg, the agent of the Archbishop and Elector of Mainz, who farmed the indulgences; the third was in the keeping of the civil authority. From time to time the box was opened in presence of a notary public, and its contents counted and registered.

The form in which the pardon was given was that of a letter of absolution. These letters ran in the following terms: -

“May our Lord Jesus Christ have pity on thee, N. N., and absolve thee by the merits of his most holy passion. And I, by virtue of the apostolic power which has been confided to me, do absolve thee from all ecclesiastical censures, judgments, and penalties which thou mayest have merited, and from all excesses, sins, and crimes which thou mayest have committed, however great or enormous they may be, and for whatsoever cause, even though they had been reserved to our most Holy Father the Pope and the Apostolic See. I efface all attainders of unfitness and all marks of infamy thou mayest have drawn on thee on this occasion; I remit the punishment thou shouldest have had to endure in purgatory; I make thee anew a participator in the Sacraments of the Church; I incorporate thee afresh in the communion of the saints; and I reinstate thee in the innocence and purity in which thou wast at the hour of thy baptism; so that, at the hour of thy death, the gate through which is the entrance to the place of torments and punishments shall be closed

¹⁸Summaria Instructio. (Gerdesius, tom. 1, App. No. 9.)

against thee, and that which leads to the Paradise of joy shall be open. And shouldest thou be spared long, this grace shall remain immutable to the time of thy last end. In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” “Brother John Tetzel, Commissioner, has signed it with his own hand.”¹⁹

Day by day great crowds repaired to this market, where for a little earthly gold men might buy all the blessings of heaven. Tetzel and his indulgences became the one topic of talk in Germany. The matter was discussed in all circles, from the palace and the university to the market-place and the wayside inn. The more sensible portion of the nation were shocked at the affair. That a little money should atone for the guilt and efface the stain of the most enormous crimes, was contrary to the natural justice of mankind. That the vilest characters should be placed on a level with the virtuous and the orderly, seemed a blow at the foundation of morals - an unhinging of society. The Papal key, instead of unlocking the fountains of grace and holiness, had opened the flood-gates of impiety and vice, and men trembled at the deluge of licentiousness which seemed ready to rush in and overflow the land. Those who had some knowledge of the Word of God viewed the matter in even a worse light. They knew that the pardon of sin was the sole prerogative of God: that he had delegated that power to no mortal, and that those who gathered round the red cross of Tetzel and bought his pardons were cheated of their money and their souls at the same time. Christianity, instead of a source of purity, appeared to be a fountain of pollution; and, from being the guardian and nurse of virtue, seemed to have become the patron and promoter of all ungodliness.

The thoughts of others took another direction. They looked at the “power of the keys” under the new light shed upon it by the indulgences, and began to doubt the legitimacy of that which was now being so flagrantly abused. What, asked they, are we to think of the Pope as a man of humanity and mercy? One day a miner of Schneeberg met a seller of indulgences. “Is it true,” he asked, “that we can, by throwing a penny into the chest, ransom a soul from purgatory?” “It is so,” replied the indulgence-vendor. “Ah, then,” resumed the miner, “what a merciless man the Pope must be, since

¹⁹D’Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol. 1, p. 247.

for want of a wretched penny he leaves a poor soul crying in the flames so long!” Luther embodied in his Theses on Indulgences what was a very general sentiment, when he asked, “Why does not the Pope deliver at once all the souls from purgatory by a holy charity and on account of their great wretchedness, since he delivers so many from love of perishable money and of the Cathedral of St. Peter?”²⁰ It was all very well to have a fine building at Rome, thought the people of Germany, but to open the gates of that doleful prison in which so many miserable beings live in flames, and for once make purgatory tenantless, would be a nobler monument of the grace and munificence of the Pope, than the most sumptuous temple that he can by any possibility rear in the Eternal City.

Meanwhile Friar John Tetzel and Pope Leo X. went on laboring with all their might, though wholly unwittingly and unintentionally, to pave the way for Luther. If anything could have deepened the impression produced by the scandals of Tetzel’s trade, it was the scandals of his life. He was expending, day by day, and all day long, much breath in the Church’s service, extolling the merit of her indulgences, and when night came he much needed refreshment: and he took it to his heart’s content. “The collectors led a disorderly life,” says Sarpi; “they squandered in taverns, gambling-houses, and places of ill-fame all that the people had saved from their necessities.”²¹

As regards Leo X., when the stream of gold from the countries beyond the Alps began to flow, his joy was great. He had not, like the Emperor Charles, a “Mexico” beyond the Atlantic, but he had a “Mexico” in the credulity of Christendom, and he saw neither limit nor end to the wealth it might yield him. Never again would he have cause to bewail an empty treasury. Men would never cease to sin, and so long as they continued to sin they would need pardon; and where could they go for pardon if not to the Church - in other words, to himself? He only, of all men on the earth, held the key. He might say with an ancient monarch, “Mine hand hath found as a nest the riches of the nations, and as one gathereth eggs so have I gathered all

²⁰Luther, Theses on Indulgences, 82, 83, 84.

²¹Sarpi, Hist. Conc. Trent, livr. 1, p. 16. Similar is the testimony of Guicciardini and M. de Thou.

the earth.” Thus Leo went on from day to day, building St. Peter’s, but pulling down the Papacy.

Chapter 9: The “Theses”

Unspoken Thoughts—Tetzel’s Approach—Opens his Market at Juterbock—Moral Havoc—Luther Condemns his Pardons—Tetzel’s Rage—Luther’s Opposition grows more Strenuous—Writes to the Archbishop of Mainz—A Narrow Stage, but a Great Conflict—All Saints’ Eve—Crowd of Pilgrims—Luther Nails his Theses to the Church Door—Examples—An Irrevocable Step—Some the Movement inspires with Terror—Others Hail it with Joy—The Elector’s Dream

Picture: Luther Nailing his “Theses” to the Door of the Schlosskirk at Wittemberg

Picture: Luthers House at Wittemberg

The great red cross, the stentorian voice of Tetzel, and the frequent chink of money in his iron chest, had compelled the nations of Germany to think. Rome had come too near these nations. While she remained at a distance, separated from them by the Alps, the Teutonic peoples had bowed down in worship before her; but when she presented herself as a hawker of spiritual wares for earthly pelf, when she stood before them in the person of the monk who had so narrowly escaped being tied up in a sack and flung into the river Inn, for his own sins, before he took to pardoning the sins of others, the spell was broken. But as yet the German nations only thought; they had not given utterance to their thoughts. A few murmurs might be heard, but no powerful voice had yet spoken.

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Meanwhile, Tetzel, traveling from town to town, eating of the best at the hostelries, and paying his bills in drafts on Paradise; pressing carriers and others into his service for the transport of his merchandise, and recompensing them for the labor of themselves and their mules by letters of indulgence, approached within four miles of Luther. He little suspected how dangerous the ground on which he was now treading! The Elector Frederick, shocked at this man’s trade, and yet more at the scandals of his life, had forbidden

him to enter Saxony; but he came as near to it as he durst; and now at Juterbock, a small town on the Saxon frontier, Tetzel set up his red cross, and opened his market. Wittemberg was only an hour and a half's walk distant, and thousands flocked from it to Juterbock, to do business with the pardon-monger. When Luther first heard of Tetzel, which was only a little while before, he said, "By the help of God, I will make a hole in his drum:" he might have added, "and in that of his master, Leo X." Tetzel was now almost within ear-shot of the Reformer.

Luther, who acted as confessor as well as preacher, soon discovered the moral havoc which Tetzel's pardons were working. For we must bear in mind that Luther still believed in the Church, and in obedience to her commands exacted confession and penance on the part of his flock, though only as preparatives, and not as the price, of that free salvation which he taught, comes through the merit of Christ, and is appropriated by faith alone. One day, as he sat in the confessional, some citizens of Wittemberg came before him, and confessed having committed thefts, adulteries, and other heinous sins. "You must abandon your evil courses," said Luther, "otherwise I cannot absolve you." To his surprise and grief, they replied that they had no thought of leaving off their sins; that this was not in the least necessary, inasmuch as these sins were already pardoned, and they themselves secured against the punishment of them. The deluded people would thereupon pull out the indulgence papers of Tetzel, and show them in testimony of their innocence. Luther could only tell them that these papers were worthless, that they must repent, and be forgiven of God, otherwise they should perish everlastingly.

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Denied absolution, and sore at losing both their money and their hope of heaven, these persons hastened back to Tetzel, and informed him that a monk in Wittemberg was making light of his indulgences, and was warning the people against them as deceptions. Tetzel literally foamed with rage, and bellowing more loudly than ever, poured out a torrent of anathemas against the man who had dared to speak disparagingly of the pardons of the Pope. To energetic words, Tetzel added significant acts. Kindling a fire in the market-place of

¹Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 7, p. 17.

Juterbock, he gave a sign of what would be done to the man who should obstruct his holy work. The Pope, he said, had given him authority to commit all such heretics to the flames.

Nothing terrified by Tetzel's angry words, or by the fire that blazed so harmlessly in the market-place of Juterbock, Luther became yet more strenuous in his opposition. He condemned the indulgences in his place in the university. He wrote to the Prince Archbishop of Mainz, praying him to interpose his authority and stop a proceeding that was a scandal to religion and a snare to the souls of men.² He little knew that he was addressing the very man who had farmed these indulgences. He even believed the Pope to be ignorant, if not of the indulgences, of the frightful excesses that attended the sale of them. From the pulpit, with all affection but with all fidelity, he warned his flock not to take part in so great a wickedness. God, he said, demands a satisfaction for sin, but not from the sinner; Christ has made satisfaction for the sinner, and God pardons him freely. Offenses against herself the Church can pardon, but not offenses against God. Tetzel's indulgences cannot open the door of Paradise, and they who believe in them believe in a lie, and unless they repent shall die in their sins.

In this Luther differed more widely from his Church than he was then aware of. She holds with Tetzel rather than with Luther. She not merely remits ecclesiastical censures, she pardons sin, and lifts off the wrath of God from the soul.

We have here a narrow stage but a great conflict. From the pulpit at Wittemberg is preached a free salvation. At Juterbock stands the red cross, where heaven is sold for money. Within a radius of a few miles is fought the same battle which is soon to cover the face of Christendom. The two systems - salvation by Christ and salvation by Rome - are here brought face to face; the one helps sharply to define the other, not in their doctrines only, but in their issues, the holiness which the one demands and the licentiousness which the other sanctions, that men may mark the contrast between the two, and make their choice between the Gospel of Wittemberg and the indulgence-market of Juterbock. Already Protestantism has obtained

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²Apologia Luth. cont. Hen. Ducem. Brunsvicensem. Ex Seckendorf, Hist. Lutheran., lib. 1, sec. 7, p. 16.

a territorial foothold, where it is unfurling its banner and enlisting disciples.

Tetzel went on with the sale of his indulgences, and Luther felt himself driven to more decisive measures. The Elector Frederick had lately built the castle-church of Wittemberg, and had spared neither labor nor money in collecting relics to enrich and beautify it. These relics, in their settings of gold and precious stones, the priests were accustomed to show to the people on the festival of All Saints, the 1st of November; and crowds came to Wittemberg to nourish their piety by the sight of the precious objects, and earn the indulgence offered to all who should visit the church on that day. The eve of the festival (October 31st) was now come. The street of Wittemberg was thronged with pilgrims. At the hour of noon, Luther, who had given no hint to any one of what he purposed, sallied forth, and joined the stream that was flowing to the castle-church, which stood close by the eastern gate. Pressing through the crowd, and drawing forth a paper, he proceeds to nail it upon the door of the church. The strokes of his hammer draw the crowd around him, and they begin eagerly to read. What is on the paper? It contains ninety-five "Theses" or propositions on the doctrine of indulgences. We select the following as comprehensive of the spirit and scope of the whole: -

V. The Pope is unable and desires not to remit any other penalty than that which he has imposed of his own good pleasure, or conformably to the canons - that is, to the Papal ordinances.

VI. The Pope cannot remit any condemnation, but can only declare and confirm the remission that God himself has given, except only in cases that belong to him. If he does otherwise, the condemnation continues the same.

VIII. The laws of ecclesiastical penance can be imposed only on the living, and in no wise respect the dead.

XXI. The commissaries of indulgences are in error, when they say that by the Papal indulgence a man is delivered from every punishment and is saved.

XXV. The same power that the Pope has over purgatory in the Church at large, is possessed by every bishop and every curate in his own particular diocese and parish.

XXXII. Those who fancy themselves sure of salvation by indulgences will go to perdition along with those who teach them so.

XXXVII. Every true Christian, dead or living, is a partaker of all the blessings of Christ, or of the Church, by the gift of God, and without any letter of indulgence.

XXXVIII. Yet we must not despise the Pope’s distributive and pardoning power, for his pardon is a declaration of God’s pardon.

XLIX. We should teach Christians that the Pope’s indulgence is good if we put no confidence in it, but that nothing is more hurtful if it diminishes our piety.

L. We should teach Christians that if the Pope knew of the extortions of the preachers of indulgences, he would rather the Mother Church of St. Peter were burned and reduced to ashes, than see it built up with the skin, the flesh, and the bones of his flock.

LI. We should teach Christians that the Pope (as it is his duty) would distribute his own money to the poor, whom the indulgence-sellers are now stripping of their last farthing, even were he compelled to sell the Mother Church of St. Peter.

LII. To hope to be saved by indulgences is a lying and an empty hope, although even the commissary of indulgences - nay, further, the Pope himself - should pledge their souls to guarantee it.

LIII. They are the enemies of the Pope and of Jesus Christ who, by reason of the preaching of indulgences, forbid the preaching of the Word of God.

LXII. The true and precious treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.

LXXVI. The Papal pardons cannot remit even the least of venal sins as regards the guilt.³

These propositions Luther undertook to defend next day in the university against all who might choose to impugn them. No one appeared.

In this paper Luther struck at more than the abuses of indulgences. Underneath was a principle subversive of the whole Papal

³Loesher has inserted these “Theses” in full in his *Acts and Documents of the Reformation*, tom. 1, p. 438 et seq.; also Kappius in his *Theatrum Nundinationis Indulgentiarum Tezelianae*, p. 73 et seq.; and so too Gerdesius, tom. 1, App. No. 11, p. 114. 1035

[263] system. In the midst of some remaining darkness - for he still reverences the Pope, believes in purgatory, and speaks of the merits of the saints - he preaches the Gospel of a free salvation. The "Theses" put God's gift in sharp antagonism to the Pope's gift. The one is free, the other has to be bought. God's pardon does not need the Pope's indorsement, but the Pope's forgiveness, unless followed by God's, is of no avail; it is a cheat, a delusion. Such is the doctrine of the "Theses." That mightiest of all prerogatives, the power of pardoning sins and so of saving men's souls, is taken from the "Church" and given back to God.

The movement is fairly launched. It is speeding on; it grows not by weeks only, but by hours and moments; but no one has yet estimated aright its power, or guessed where only it can find its goal. The hand that posted up these propositions cannot take them down. They are no longer Luther's, they are mankind's.

The news traveled rapidly. The feelings awakened were, of course, mixed, but in the main joyful. Men felt a relief - they were conscious of a burden taken from their hearts; and, though they could scarce say why, they were sure that a new day had dawned. In the homes of the people, and in the cell of many a monk even, there was joy. "While those," says Mathesius, "who had entered the convents to seek a good table, a lazy life, or consideration and honour, heaped Luther's name with revilings, those monks who lived in prayer, fasting, and mortification, gave thanks to God as soon as they heard the cry of that eagle which John Huss had foretold a century before." The appearance of Luther gladdened the evening of the aged Reuchlin. He had had his own battles with the monks, and he was overjoyed when he saw an abler champion enter the lists to maintain the truth.

The verdict of Erasmus on the affair is very characteristic. The Elector of Saxony having asked him what he thought of it, the great scholar replied with his usual shrewdness, "Luther has committed two unpardonable crimes - he has attacked the Pope's tiara, and the bellies of the monks."

There were others whose fears predominated over their hopes, probably from permitting their eyes to rest almost exclusively upon the difficulties. The historian Kranz, of Hamburg, was on his deathbed when Luther's "Theses" were brought to him. "Thou

art right, brother Martin," exclaimed he on reading them, "but thou wilt not succeed. Poor monk, hie thee to thy cell, and cry, 'O God, have pity on me.'" ⁴ An old priest of Hexter, in Westphalia, shook his head and exclaimed, "Dear brother Martin, if thou succeed in overthrowing this purgatory, and all these paper-dealers, truly thou art a very great gentleman." But others, lifting their eyes higher, saw the hand of God in the affair. "At last," said Dr. Fleck, prior of the monastery of Steinlausitz, who had for some time ceased to celebrate mass, "At last we have found the man we have waited for so long;" and, playing on the meaning of the word Wittemberg, he added, "All the world will go and seek wisdom on that mountain, and will find it."

We step a moment out of the domain of history, to narrate a dream which the Elector Frederick of Saxony had on the night preceding the memorable day on which Luther affixed his "Theses" to the door of the castle-church. The elector told it the next morning to his brother, Duke John, who was then residing with him at his palace of Schweinitz, six leagues from Wittemberg. The dream is recorded by all the chroniclers of the time. Of its truth there is no doubt, however we may interpret it. We cite it here as a compendious and dramatic epitome of the affair of the "Theses," and the movement which grew out of them.

On the morning of the 31st October, 1517, the elector said to Duke John,

"Brother, I must tell you a dream which I had last night, and the meaning of which I should like much to know. It is so deeply impressed on my mind, that I will never forget it, were I to live a thousand years. For I dreamed it thrice, and each time with new circumstances."

Duke John: "Is it a good or a bad dream?"

The Elector: "I know not; God knows."

Duke John: "Don't be uneasy at it; but be so good as tell it to me."

The Elector: "Having gone to bed last night, fatigued and out of spirits, I fell asleep shortly after my prayer, and slept calmly for about two hours and a half; I then awoke, and continued awake to

⁴Gerdesius, Hist. Reform., tom. 1, p. 132.

midnight, all sorts of thoughts passing through my mind. Among other things, I thought how I was to observe the Feast of All Saints. I prayed for the poor souls in purgatory; and supplicated God to guide me, my counsels, and my people according to truth. I again fell asleep, and then dreamed that Almighty God sent me a monk, who was a true son of the Apostle Paul. All the saints accompanied him by order of God, in order to bear testimony before me, and to declare that he did not come to contrive any plot, but that all that he did was according to the will of God. They asked me to have the goodness graciously to permit him to write something on the door of the church of the Castle of Wittemberg. This I granted through my chancellor. Thereupon the monk went to the church, and began to write in such large characters that I could read the writing at Schweinitz. The pen which he used was so large that its end reached as far as Rome, where it pierced the ears of a lion that was crouching there, and caused the triple crown upon the head of the Pope to shake. All the cardinals and princes, running hastily up, tried to prevent it from falling. You and I, brother, wished also to assist, and I stretched out my arm; - but at this moment I awoke, with my arm in the air, quite amazed, and very much enraged at the monk for not managing his pen better. I recollected myself a little; it was only a dream.

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“I was still half asleep, and once more closed my eyes. The dream returned. The lion, still annoyed by the pen, began to roar with all his might, so much so that the whole city of Rome, and all the States of the Holy Empire, ran to see what the matter was. The Pope requested them to oppose this monk, and applied particularly to me, on account of his being in my country. I again awoke, repeated the Lord’s prayer, entreated God to preserve his Holiness, and once more fell asleep.”

“Then I dreamed that all the princes of the Empire, and we among them, hastened to Rome, and strove, one after another, to break the pen; but the more we tried the stiffer it became, sounding as if it had been made of iron. We at length desisted. I then asked the monk (for I was sometimes at Rome, and sometimes at Wittemberg) where he got this pen, and why it was so strong. ‘The pen,’ replied he, ‘belonged to an old goose of Bohemia, a hundred years old. I got it from one of my old schoolmasters. As to its strength, it is owing

to the impossibility of depriving it of its pith or marrow; and I am quite astonished at it myself.' Suddenly I heard a loud noise - a large number of other pens had sprung out of the long pen of the monk. I awoke a third time: it was daylight."

Duke John: "Chancellor, what is your opinion? Would we had a Joseph, or a Daniel, enlightened by God!"

Chancellor: "Your highness knows the common proverb, that the dreams of young girls, learned men, and great lords have usually some hidden meaning. The meaning of this dream, however, we shall not be able to know for some time - not till the things to which it relates have taken place. Wherefore, leave the accomplishment to God, and place it fully in his hand."

Duke John: "I am of your opinion, Chancellor; 'tis not fit for us to annoy ourselves in attempting to discover the meaning. God will overrule all for his glory." [266]

Elector: "May our faithful God do so; yet I shall never forget, this dream. I have, indeed, thought of an interpretation, but I keep it to myself. Time, perhaps, will show if I have been a good diviner."⁵

So passed the morning of the 31st October, 1517, in the royal castle of Schweinitz. The events of the evening at Wittemberg we have already detailed. The elector has hardly made an end of telling his dream when the monk comes with his hammer to interpret it.

⁵D'Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.* (Collins, 1870, pp. 79, 80), from an MS. in the archives of Weimar, taken down from the mouth of Spalatin, and which was published at the last jubilee of the Reformation, 1817.

Chapter 10: Luther Attacked by Tetzel, Prierio, and Eck

Consequences—Unforeseen by Luther—Rapid Dissemination of the “Theses”—Counter-Theses of Tetzel—Burned by the Students at Wittemberg—Sylvester, Master of the Sacred Palace, Attacks Luther—The Church All, the Bible Nothing—Luther Replies—Prierio again Attacks—Is Silenced by the Pope—Dr. Eck next Attacks—Is Discomfited

Picture: Pope Leo X.

Picture: In the Market-place of Wittemberg: People Discussing the “Theses” of Luther

The day on which the monk of Wittemberg posted up his “Theses,” occupies a distinguished place among the great days of history. It marks a new and grander starting-point in religion and liberty.¹ The propositions of Luther preached to all Christendom that God does not sell pardon, but bestows it as a free gift on the ground of the death of his Son; the “Theses” in short were but an echo of the song sung by the angels on the plain of Bethlehem fifteen centuries before - “On earth peace: good-will to men.”

The world had forgotten that song: no wonder, seeing the Book that contains it had long been hidden. Taking God to be a hard task-master, who would admit no one into heaven unless he paid a great price, Christendom had groaned for ages under penances and expiatory works of self-righteousness. But the sound of Luther’s hammer was like that of the silver trumpet on the day of Jubilee: it proclaimed the advent of the year of release - the begun opening of the doors of that great prison-house in which the human soul had sat for ages and sighed in chains.

Luther acted without plan - so he himself afterwards confessed. He obeyed an impulse that was borne in upon him; he did what he

¹In 1517 the Council of the Lateran, summoned by Julius II., for the reform of the Church, was dissolved. In that same year, remarks Seckendorf, God sent the Reformation.

felt it to be his duty at the moment, without looking carefully or anxiously along the line of consequences to see whether the blow might not fall on greater personages than Tetzel. His arm would have been unnerved, and the hammer would have fallen from his grasp, had he been told that its strokes would not merely scare away Tetzel and break up the market at Juterbock, but would resound through Christendom, and centuries after he had gone to his grave, would be sending back their echoes in the fall of hierarchies, and in the overthrow of that throne before which Luther was still disposed to bow as the seat of the Vicar of Christ.

Luther's eye did not extend to these remote countries and times; he looked only at what was before him - the professors and students of the university; his flock in Wittemberg in danger of being ensnared; the crowd of pilgrims assembled to earn an indulgence - and to the neighboring towns and parts of Germany. These he hoped to influence.

But far beyond these modest limits was spread the fame of Luther's "Theses." They contained truth, and truth is light, and light must necessarily diffuse itself, and penetrate the darkness on every side. The "Theses" were found to be as applicable to Christendom as to Wittemberg, and as hostile to the great indulgence-market at Rome as to the little one at Juterbock. Now was seen the power of that instrumentality which God had prepared beforehand for this emergency - the printing-press. Copied with the hand, how slowly would these propositions have traveled, and how limited the number of persons who would have read them! But the printing-press, multiplying copies, sowed them like snow-flakes over Saxony. Other printing-presses set to work, and speedily there was no country in Europe where the "Theses" of the monk of Wittemberg were not as well known as in Saxony. [267]

The moment of their publication was singularly opportune; pilgrims from all the surrounding States were then assembled at Wittemberg. Instead of buying an indulgence they bought Luther's "Theses," not one, but many copies, and carried them in their wallets to their own homes. In a fortnight these propositions were circulated over all Germany. ² They were translated into Dutch, and read in

²Myconius, *Hist. Reform.*, 13.

Holland; they were rendered into Spanish, and studied in the cities and universities of the Iberian peninsula. In a month they had made the tour of Europe. ³ “It seemed,” to use the words of Myconius, “as if the angels had been their carriers.” Copies were offered for sale in Jerusalem. In four short weeks Luther’s tract had become a household book, and his name a household word in all Europe.

The “Theses” were the one topic of conversation everywhere - in all circles, and in all sorts of places. They were discussed by the learned in the universities, and by the monks in their cells. ⁴ In the market-place, in the shop, and in the tavern, men paused and talked together of the bold act and the new doctrine of the monk of Wittenberg. A copy was procured and read by Leo X. in the Vatican.

The very darkness of the age helped to extend the circulation and the knowledge of the “Theses.” The man who kindles a bonfire on a mountaintop by day will have much to do to attract the eyes of even a single parish. He who kindles his signal amid the darkness of night will arouse a whole kingdom. This last was what Luther had done. He had lighted a great fire in the midst of the darkness of Christendom, and far and wide over distant realms was diffused the splendor of that light; and men, opening their eyes on the sudden illumination that was brightening the sky, hailed the new dawn.

No one was more surprised at the effects produced than Luther himself. That a sharp discussion should spring up in the university; that the convents and colleges of Saxony should be agitated; that some of his friends should approve and others condemn, was what he had anticipated; but that all Christendom should be shaken as by an earthquake, was an issue he had never dreamed of. Yet this was what had happened. The blow he had dealt had loosened the foundations of an ancient and venerable edifice, which had received the reverence of many preceding generations, and his own reverence among the rest. It was now that he saw the full extent of the responsibility he had incurred, and the formidable character of the opposition he had provoked. His friends were silent, stunned by the suddenness and boldness of the act. He stood alone. He had thrown down the gage,

³Gerdesius, *Hist. Reform.*, tom. 1, p. 132.

⁴Mathesius, p. 13.

and he could not now decline the battle. That battle was mustering on every side. Still he did not repent of what he had done. He was prepared to stand by the doctrine of his "Theses." He looked upward.

Tetzel by this time had broken up his encampment at Juterbock - having no more sins to pardon and no more money to gather - and had gone to the wealthier locality of Frankfort-on-the-Oder. He had planted the red cross and the iron box on one of the more fashionable promenades of the city. Thither the rumor of the Wittemberg "Theses" followed him. He saw at a glance the mischief the monk had done him, and made a show of fight after his own fashion. Full of rage, he kindled a great fire, and as he could not burn Luther in person he burned his "Theses." This feat accomplished, he rubbed up what little theology he knew, and attempted a reply to the doctor of Wittemberg in a set of counter-propositions. They were but poor affairs. Among them were the following: -

III. "Christians should be taught that the Pope, in the plenitude of his power, is superior to the universal Church, and superior to Councils; and that entire submission is due to his decrees."

IV. "Christians should be taught that the Pope alone has the right to decide in questions of Christian doctrine; that he alone, and no other, has power to explain, according to his judgment, the sense of Holy Scripture, and to approve or condemn the words and works of others."

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

XVII. "Christians should be taught that there are many things which the Church regards as certain articles of the Catholic faith, although they are not found either in the inspired Scripture or in the earlier Fathers."⁵

There is but one doctrine taught in Tetzel's "Theses" - the Pontifical supremacy, namely; and there is but one duty enjoined - absolute submission. At the feet of the Pope are to be laid the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers, human reason. The man who is not prepared to make this surrender deserves to do penance in the fire which Tetzel had kindled. So thought the Pope's vendor of pardons.

⁵Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 12, p. 27. Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 2.

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The proceeding of Tetzel at Frankfort soon came to the knowledge of the students of Wittemberg. They espoused with more warmth than was needed the cause of their professor. They bought a bundle of Tetzel's "Theses" and publicly burned them. Many of the citizens were present, and gave unmistakable signs, by their laughter and hootings, of the estimation in which they held the literary and theological attainments of the renowned indulgence-monger. Luther knew nothing of the matter. The proceedings savored too much of Rome's method of answering an opponent to find favor in his eyes. When informed of it, he said that really it was superfluous to kindle a pile to consume a document, the extravagance and absurdity of which would alone have effected its extinction.

But soon abler antagonists entered the lists. The first to present himself was Sylvester Mazzolini, of Prierio. He was Master of the Sacred Palace at Rome, and discharged the office of censor. Stationed on the watch-tower of Christendom, this man had it in charge to say what books were to be circulated, and what were to be suppressed; what doctrines Christians were to believe, and what they were not to believe. Protestant liberty, claiming freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and freedom of printing, came at this early stage into immediate conflict with Roman despotism, which claimed absolute control over the mind, the tongue, and the pen. The monk of Wittemberg, who nails his "Theses" on the church door in the open day, encounters the Papal censor, who blots out every line that is not in agreement with the Papacy. ⁶

The controversy between Luther and Prierio, as raised by the latter, turned on "the rule of faith." Surely it was not altogether of chance that this fundamental point was debated at this early stage. It put in a clear light the two very different foundations on which Protestantism and the Papacy respectively stood.

Prierio's performance took the form of a dialogue. He laid down certain great principles touching the constitution of the Church, the authority vested in it, and the obedience due by all Christians to

⁶His epithets are somewhat scurrilous for a Master of the Sacred Palace. "He would like to know," he says, "whether this Martin has an iron nose or a brazen head" (an ferreum nasum, an caput oeneum). - Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 13, p. 31. One thing was clear, that this Martin had an iron pen.

that authority.⁷ The universal Church essentially, said Prierio, is a congregation for worship of all believers; virtually it is the Roman Church; representatively it is the college of cardinals; concentratively and organically it is the supreme Pontiff, who is the head of the Church, but in a different sense from Christ. Further he maintained that, as the Church universal cannot err in determining questions pertaining to faith and morals, neither can the organs through which the Church elaborates and expresses its decisions - the Councils and the supreme Pontiff - err.⁸ These principles he applied practically, thus: "Whoever does not rely on the teaching of the Roman Church and of the Roman Pontiff, as the infallible rule of faith, from which the Holy Scriptures themselves derive their strength and their authority, is a heretic."

It is curious to note that already, in this first exchange of arguments between Protestantism and the Papacy, the controversy was narrowed to this one great question: Whom is man to believe, God or the Church? - in other words, have we a Divine or a human foundation for our faith? The Bible is the sole infallible authority, said the men of Wittemberg. No, said this voice from the Vatican, the sole infallible authority is the Church. The Bible is a dead letter. Not a line of it can men understand: its true sense is utterly beyond their apprehension. In the Church - that is, in the priests - is lodged the power of infallibly perceiving the true sense of Scripture, and of revealing it to Christians. Thus there are two Bibles. Here is the one a book, a dead letter; a body without living spirit or living voice; practically of no use. Here is the other, a living organization, in which dwells the Holy Spirit. The one is a written Bible: the other is a developed Bible. The one was completed and finished eighteen hundred years since: the other has been growing with the ages; it has been coming into being through the decisions of Councils, the rules of canonists, and the edicts of Popes. Councils have discussed and deliberated; interpreters and canonists have toiled; Popes have legislated, speaking as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance; and, as the product of all these minds and of all these ages, you have now the Bible - the deposit of the faith - the sole infallible authority to which

⁷Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 3.

⁸Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 13, p. 31.

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men are to listen. The written book was the original seed; but the Church - that is, the hierarchy - is the stem which has sprung from it. The Bible is now a dead husk; the living tree which has grown out of it - the fully rounded and completely developed body of doctrine, now before the world in the Church - is the only really useful and authoritative revelation of God, and the one infallible rule by which it is his will that men should walk. The Master of the Sacred Palace deposited the germ of this line of argument. Subsequent Popish polemics have more fully developed the argument, and given it the form into which we have thrown it.

Prierio's doctrine was unchallengeably orthodox at the Vatican, for the meridian of which it was calculated. At Wittemberg his tractate read like a bitter satire on the Papacy. Luther thought, or affected to think, that an enemy had written it, and had given it on purpose this extravagant loftiness, in order to throw ridicule and contempt over the prerogatives of the Papal See. He said that he recognized in this affair the hand of Ulric von Hutten - a knight, whose manner it was to make war on Rome with the shafts of wit and raillery.

But Luther soon saw that he must admit the real authorship, and answer this attack from the foot of the Papal throne. Prierio boasted that he had spent only three days over his performance: Luther occupied only two in his reply. The doctor of Wittemberg placed the Bible of the living God over against the Bible of Prierio, as the foundation of men's faith. The fundamental position taken in his answer was expressed in the words of Holy Writ: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Prierio had centered all the faith, obedience, and hopes of men in the Pope: Luther places them on that Rock which is Christ. Thus, with every day, and with each new antagonist, the true nature of the controversy, and the momentous issues which it had raised, were coming more clearly and broadly into view.

Prierio, who deemed it impossible that a Master of the Sacred Palace could be vanquished by a German monk, wrote a reply. This second performance was even more indiscreet than his first. The Pope's prerogative he aimed at exalting to even a higher pitch than before; and he was so ill-advised as to found it on that very

extraordinary part of the canon law which forbids any one to stop the Pope, or to admit the possibility of his erring, though he should be found on the high road to perdition, and dragging the whole world after him. ⁹ The Pope, finding that Sylvester's replies were formidable only to the Papacy, enjoined silence upon the too zealous champion of Peter's See. ¹⁰ As regarded Leo himself, he took the matter more coolly than the master of his palace. There had been noisy monks in all ages, he reflected; the Papacy had not therefore fallen. Moreover, it was but a feeble echo of the strife that reached him in the midst of his statues, gardens, courtiers, and courtesans. He even praised the genius of brother Martin; ¹¹ for Leo could pardon a little truth, it spoken wittily and gracefully. Then, thinking that he had bestowed too much praise on the Germans, he hinted that the wine-cup may have quickened the wit of the monk, and that his pen would be found less vigorous when the fumes of the liquor had subsided, as they would soon do.

Scarcely had Prierio been disposed of, when another combatant started up. This was Hochstraten, an inquisitor at Cologne. This disputant belonged to an order unhappily more familiar with the torch than with the pen; and it was not long till Hochstraten showed that his fingers, unused to the one, itched to grasp the other. He lost his temper at the very outset, and called for a scaffold. If, replied Luther, nothing daunted by this threat, it is the faggot that is to decide the controversy, the sooner I am burned the better, otherwise the monks may have cause to rue it.

Yet another opponent! The first antagonist of Luther came from the Roman Curia; the second from monachism; he who now appears, the third, is the representative of the schools. This was Dr. Eck, professor of scholastic theology at Ingolstadt. ¹² He rose up in the fullness of his erudition and of his fame, to extinguish the monk of

⁹This almost incredible decree runs as follows: - "If the Pope should become neglectful of his own salvation, and of that of other men, and so lost to all good that he draw down with himself innumerable people by heaps into hell, and plunge them with himself into eternal torments, yet no mortal man may presume to reprehend him, forasmuch as he is judge of all, and to be judged of no one." (Corpus Juris Canonici, Decreti, pars. 1, distinct., 40, can. 6.)

¹⁰Seckendorf, Hist. Lutheran., lib. 1, sec. 15, p. 40.

¹¹Ibid. "Che Fra Martino fosse un bellissimo ingegno."

¹²Ibid., lib. 1, sec. 13, p. 30.

Wittenberg, although he had but recently contracted a friendship with him, cemented by an interchange of letters. Though a scholar, the professor of Ingolstadt did not account it beneath him to employ abuse, and resort to insinuation. "It is the Bohemian poison which you are circulating," said he to Luther, hoping to awaken against him the old prejudice which still animated the Germans against Huss and the Reformers of Bohemia. So far as Eck condescended to argue, his weapons, taken from the Aristotelian armory, were adapted for a scholastic tournament only; they were useless in a real battle, like that in which he now engaged. They were speedily shivered in his hand. "Would you not hold it impudence," asked [270] Luther, meeting Dr. Eck on his own ground, "in one to maintain, as a part of the philosophy of Aristotle, what one found it impossible to prove Aristotle had ever taught? You grant it. It is the most impudent of all impudence to affirm that to be a part of Christianity which Christ never taught."

The doctor of Ingolstadt sank into silence. One after another the opponents of the Reformer retire from Luther's presence discomfited. First, the Master of the Sacred Palace advances against the monk, confident of crushing him by the weight of the Pope's authority. "The Pope is but a man, and may err," says Luther, as with quiet touch he demolishes the mock infallibility: "God is truth, and cannot err." Next comes the Inquisitor, with his hints that there is such an institution as the "Holy Office" for convincing those whom nothing else can. Luther laughs these threats to scorn. Last of all appears the doctor, clad in the armor of the schools, who shares the fate of his predecessors. The secret of Luther's strength they do not know, but it is clear that all their efforts to overcome it can but advertise men that Roman infallibility is a quicksand, and that the hopes of the human heart can repose in safety nowhere, save on the Eternal Rock.

Chapter 11: Luther's Journey to Augsburg

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Luther Advances—Eyes of the Curia begin to Open—Luther Cited to Rome—University of Wittemberg Intercedes for him—Cajetan Deputed to Try the Cause in Germany—Character of Cajetan—Cause Prejudged—Melancthon—Comes to Wittemberg—His Genius—Yoke-fellows—Luther Departs for Augsburg—Journey on Foot—No Safe-conduct—Myconius—A Borrowed Coat—Prognostications—Arrives at Augsburg

The eyes of the Pope and the adherents of the Papacy now began to open to the real importance of the movement inaugurated at Wittemberg. They had regarded it slightly, almost contemptuously, as but a quarrel amongst that quarrelsome generation the monks, which had broken out in a remote province of their dominions, and which would speedily subside and leave Rome unshaken. But, so far from dying out, the movement was every day deepening its seat and widening its sphere; it was allying itself with great spiritual and moral forces; it was engendering new thoughts in the minds of men; already a phalanx of disciples, created and continually multiplied by its own energies, stood around it, and, unless speedily checked, the movement would work, they began to fear, the downfall of their system.

Every day Luther was making a new advance. His words were winged arrows, his sermons were lightning-flashes, they shed a blaze all around: there was an energy in his faith which set on fire the souls of men, and he had a wonderful power to evoke sympathy, and to win confidence. The common people especially loved and respected him. Many cheered him on because he opposed the Pope, but not a few because he dealt out to them that Bread for which their souls had long hungered.

His "Theses" had been mistaken or misrepresented by ignorant or prejudiced persons; he resolved to explain them in clearer language. He now published what he styled his "Resolutions," in which, with

admirable moderation and firmness, he softens the harder and lights up the darker parts of his "Theses," but retracts nothing of their teaching.

In this new publication he maintains that every true penitent possesses God's forgiveness, and has no need to buy an indulgence; that the stock of merit from which indulgences are dispensed is a pure chimera, existing only in the brain of the indulgence-monger; that the power of the Pope goes no farther than to enable him to declare the pardon which God has already bestowed, and that the rule of faith is the Holy Scriptures. These statements were the well-marked stages the movement had already attained. The last especially, the sole infallible authority of the Bible, was a reformation in itself - a seed from which must spring a new system.

Rome, at this crisis, had need to be decided and prompt; she strangely vacillated and blundered. Leo X. was a skeptic, and skepticism is fatal to earnestness and rigor. The Emperor Maximilian was more alive to the danger that impended over the Papal See than Leo. He was nearer the cradle of the movement, and beheld with dismay the spread of the Lutheran doctrines in his own dominions. He wrote energetically, if mayhap he might rouse the Pope, who was slumbering in his palace, careless of everything save his literary and artistic treasures, while this tempest was gathering over him. The Diet of the Empire was at that moment (1518) sitting at Augsburg. The emperor sought to inflame the members, of the Diet by pronouncing a furious philippic against Luther, including the patrons and defenders whom the Reformer had found among the powerful. The Elector Frederick of Saxony was especially meant. It helped to augment the chagrin of the emperor, that mainly through the influence of Frederick he had been thwarted in carrying a project through the Diet, on which he was much set as tending to the aggrandizement of his dynasty - the election of his grandson, the future Charles V., to succeed him in the Empire. But if Frederick herein did the emperor a disfavor, he won for himself greater consideration at the court of the Pope, for there were few things that Leo X. dreaded more than the union of half the scepters of Europe in one hand. Meanwhile the energetic letter of Maximilian was not without effect, and it was resolved to lay vigorous hold upon the Wittemberg movement. On the 7th August, 1518, Luther was summoned to answer at Rome,

within sixty days, to the charges preferred against him. ¹ To have gone to Rome would have been to march into his grave. But the peril of staying was scarcely less than the peril of going. He would be condemned as contumacious, and the Pope would follow up the excommunication by striking him, if not with his own hand, with that of the emperor. The powers of earth, headed by the King of the Seven Hills, were rising up against Luther. He had no visible defense - no acknowledged protector. There seemed no escape for the unbefriended monk.

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The University of Wittemberg, of which Luther was the soul, made earnest intercession for him at the court of the Vatican, ² dwelling with special emphasis upon the unsuspected character of his doctrine, and the blameless manners of his life, not reflecting, apparently, how little weight either plea would carry in the quarter where it was urged. A more powerful intercessor was found for Luther in the Elector Frederick, who pleaded that it was a right of the Germans to have all ecclesiastical questions decided upon their own soil, and urged in accordance therewith that some fit person should be deputed to hear the cause in Germany, mentioning at the same time his brother-elect, the Archbishop of Treves, as one every way qualified to discharge this office. The peril was passed more easily than could have been anticipated. The Pope remembered that Frederick of Saxony had done him a service at the Diet of Augsburg, and he thought it not improbable that he might need his good offices in the future. And, further, his legate-a-late, now in Germany, was desirous to have the adjudication of Luther's case, never doubting that he should be able to extinguish heresy in Germany, and that the glory of such a work would compensate for his mortification at the Diet of Augsburg, where, having failed to engage the princes in a war against the Turk, he was consequently without a pretext for levying a tax upon their kingdoms. The result was that the Pope issued a brief, on the 23rd of August, empowering his legate, Cardinal de Vio, to summon Luther before him, and pronounce judgment in his case. ³ Leo, while appearing to oblige both Frederick and the cardinal, did

¹Pallavicino, *Istoria del Concilio di Trento*, lib. 1, cap. 6, p. 46; Napoli, 1757.

²Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 7, p. 46. Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 16, p. 41.

³Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 16, pp. 41, 42. Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 9, p.

not show all his hand. This transference of the cause to Germany was but another way, the Pope hoped, of bringing Luther to Rome.

Thomas de Vio, Cardinal St. Sixti, but better known as Cardinal Cajetan, cited the doctor of Wittemberg to appear before him at Augsburg. The man before whom Luther was now about to appear was born (1469) at Gaeta, a frontier town of the Neapolitan kingdom, to which events in the personal history of a subsequent Pope (Pius IX.) long afterwards gave some little notoriety. He belonged to the Dominican order, and was, moreover, a warm admirer and a zealous defender of the scholastic philosophy. The cardinal's manners were suave to a degree, but his spirit was stern. Beneath a polished, courtly, and amiable exterior, there lurked the Dominican. His talents, his learning, and his fame for sanctity made him one of the most distinguished members of the Sacred College. His master, the Pope, reposed great confidence in him, and he merited it; for De Vie was a sincere believer in all the dogmas of the Church, even in the gross forms into which they now began to develop; and no one placed the Papal prerogatives higher, or was prepared to do stouter battle for them, than he. Cardinal Cajetan took his place on the judgment-seat with much pomp, for he held firmly by the maxim that legates are above kings; but he sat there, not to investigate Luther's cause, but, to receive his unqualified and unconditional submission. The cause, as we shall afterwards see, was already decided in the highest quarter. The legate's instructions were brief but precise, and were to this effect: that he should compel the monk to retract; and, failing this, that he should shut him up in safe custody till the Pope should be pleased to send for him. ⁴ This was as much as to say, "Send him in chains to Rome."

We must pause here, and relate an episode which took place just as Luther was on the point of setting out for Augsburg, and which, from a small beginning, grew into most fruitful consequences to the Reformation, and to Luther personally. A very few days before Luther's departure to appear before the cardinal, Philip Melancthon arrived at Wittemberg, to fill the Greek chair in its university. ⁵ He was appointed to this post by the Elector Frederick, having been

⁴Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 9, p. 52. Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 5.

⁵Seckendorf, Hist. Lutheran., lib. 1, sec. 16, p. 43.

strongly recommended by the famous Reuchlin. ⁶ His fame had preceded him, and his arrival was awaited with no little expectations by the Wittenberg professors. But when he appeared amongst them, his exceedingly youthful appearance, his small figure, his shy manners, and diffident air, but ill corresponded with their preconceptions of him. They looked for nothing great from their young professor of Greek. But they did not know as yet the treasure they had found; and little especially did Luther dream what this modest, shrinking young man was to be to him in after-days. [274]

In a day or two the new professor delivered his inaugural lecture, and then it was seen what a great soul was contained in that small body. He poured forth, in elegant Latin, a stream of deep, philosophical, yet luminous thought, which delighted all who listened, and won their hearts, as well as compelled the homage of their intellects. Melancthon displayed in his address a knowledge so full, and a judgment so sound and ripened, combined with an eloquence of such grace and power, that all felt that he would make for himself a great name, and extend the fame of their university. This young scholar was destined to do all this, and a great deal ⁷ more.

We must devote a few sentences to his previous life - he was now only twenty-one. Melancthon was the son of a master armourer in Bretten in the Palatinate. His birth took place on February 14th, 1497. His father, a pious and worthy man, died when he was eleven years of age, and his education was cared for by his maternal grandfather. ⁸ His disposition was as gentle as his genius was beautiful, and from his earliest years the clearness and strength of his understanding made the acquisition of knowledge not only easy to him, but an absolute pleasure. His training was conducted first under a tutor, next at the public school of Pforzheim, and lastly at the University of Heidelberg, ⁹ where he took his bachelor's degree at fourteen. It was about this time that he changed his name from the

⁶Joach. Camerarius, *De Vita Phil. Melancth. Nar.*, cap. 7; Vratislaviae, 1819.

⁷Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec^o 16, p. 43.

⁸Camerarius, *Vita Melancth.*, cap. 1.

⁹*Ibid.*, cap. 3.

German Schwartzerd to the Greek Melancthon.¹⁰ The celebrated Reuchlin was a relation of his family, and charmed with his genius, and his fondness for the Greek tongue, he presented him with a Greek grammar and a Bible: two books which were to be the study of his life.¹¹

Luther now stood on the threshold of his stormy career. He needed a companion, and God placed Melancthon by his side. These two were the complement the one of the other; united, they formed a complete Reformer. In the one we behold a singular assemblage of all the lovelier qualities, in the other an equally singular combination of all the stronger. The gentleness, the timidity, the perspicacity of Melancthon were the companion graces of the strength, the courage, the passionate energy of Luther. It doubled the working powers of each for both to draw in the same yoke. Genius alone would have knit them into friendship, but they found a yet more sacred bond in their love of the Gospel. From the day that the two met at Wittemberg there was a new light in the heart of Luther, a new force in the movement of the Reformation.

As at the beginning of Christianity, so was it now as regards the choice of instruments by whom the work of reforming, as before of planting, the Church, was to be done. From no academy of Greek philosophy, from no theater of Roman eloquence, from no school of Jewish learning were the first preachers of the Gospel taken. These bottles were too full of the old wine of human science to receive the new wine of heavenly wisdom. To the hardy and unlettered fishermen of Galilee was the call addressed, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

All the leading Reformers, without exception, were of lowly birth. Luther first saw the light in a miner's cottage; Calvin was the grandson of a cooper in Picardy; Knox was the son of a plain burgess of a Scottish provincial town; Zwingle was born in a shepherd's hut in the Alps; and Melancthon was reared in the workshop of an armourer. Such is God's method. It is a law of the Divine working

¹⁰Both terms signify the same thing, black earth. It was not uncommon for learned men in those days to change their names from the harsher Teutonic into the more euphonious Latin or Greek.

¹¹Camerarius, *Vita Melancth.*, cap. 2, p. 43.

to accomplish mighty results by weak instruments. In this way God glorifies himself, and afterwards glorifies his servants.

We return to the scenes which we recently left. Luther departed, amid the trembling of his friends, to appear before the Legate of Rome. He might be waylaid on the road, or his journey might end in a Roman dungeon. Luther himself did not share these apprehensions. He set out with intrepid heart. It was a long way to Augsburg, and it had all to be gone on foot, for whatever the conflict had brought the monk, it had not brought him wealth. The Elector Frederick, however, gave him money for his journey,¹² but not a safe-conduct.¹³ This last, he said, was unnecessary. The fate of John Huss, which many called to mind, did not justify his confidence.

On September 28th, our traveller reached Weimar, and lodged in the convent of the Bare-footed friars. A young inmate of the monastery, who had already received Luther's doctrine into his heart, sat gazing upon him, but durst not speak to him. This was Myconius.¹⁴ The Cordeliers were not favorably disposed to their guest's opinions, and yet one of their number, John Kestner, the purveyor, believing that Luther was going to his death, could not help expressing his sympathy. "Dear brother," he said, "in Augsburg you will meet with Italians, who are learned men, but more likely to burn you than to answer you."¹⁵ "Pray to God, and to his dear Son Jesus Christ," replied Luther, "whose cause it is, to uphold it for me." Luther here met the elector, who was returning from Augsburg, and at his request preached before the court on St. Michael's day, but said not a word, as was remarked, in praise of the saint.

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From Weimar, Luther pursued his way, still on foot, to Nuremberg. Here he was welcomed by warm friends. Among these were the illustrious painter and sculptor, Albert Durer, Wenceslaus Link, monk and preacher, and others. Nuremberg had formerly enjoyed an enriching trade; it was still famous for the skill of its artists; nor were letters neglected, and the independence of mind thus engendered had led to the early reception of Luther's doctrines within it. Many came to see him, but when they found that he was traveling without

¹²D'Aubigne, *Hist. Reform.*, vol. 1, p. 366.

¹³Seckendorf, *Hist. Lutheran.*, lib. 1, sec. 16, p. 45.

¹⁴Melch. Adam, *Vita Myconii*, p. 176.

¹⁵Melch. Adam, *Vita Myconii*, p. 176.

a safe-conduct, they could not conceal their fears that he would never return from Augsburg. They tried to dissuade him from going farther, but to these counsels Luther refused to listen. No thoughts of danger could alter his purpose or shake his courage. "Even at Augsburg," wrote he, "in the midst of his enemies, Christ reigns. May Christ live, may Luther die: may the God of my salvation be exalted."

There was one favor, however, which Luther did not disdain to accept at the hands of his friends in Nuremberg. His frock, not the newest or freshest when he started from Wittemberg, by the time he reached the banks of the Pegnitz bore but too plain marks of his long journey, and his friends judged that it was not fit to appear in before the legate. They therefore attired him in a frock belonging to his friend Link. On foot, and in a borrowed cloak, he went on his way to appear before a prince of the Church, but the serge of Luther was more sublime than the purple and fine linen of De Vio.

Link and another friend accompanied him, and on the evening of October 7th they entered the gates of Augsburg, and took up their abode at the Augustine monastery. On the morrow he sent Link to notify his arrival to the cardinal.

Had Luther come a few weeks earlier he would have found Augsburg crowded with princes and counts, among whom would have been found some willing to defend him; but now all had taken their departure, the Diet being at an end, and no one remained save the Roman Legate, whose secret purpose it was that Luther should unconditionally submit, or otherwise never depart alive out of those gates within which, to De Vio's delight, he had now entered.

Chapter 12: Luther's Appearance Before Cardinal Cajetan

Urban of Serra Longa—His Interview with Luther—Revoco—Non-Revoco—A Safe-Conduct—Luther and the Papal Legate Face to Face—Luther Breaks Silence—Doctrines to be Retracted—Refusal—Second Interview—Discussion on the Sacrament and Indulgences—Luther takes his Stand on Scripture—Third Interview—Luther Reads Statement of his Views—The Legate's Haughtiness—The Difference Irreconcilable

Picture: View of Augsburg

Picture: The Old Castle at Weimar

A little melodrama preceded the serious part of the business. Early on the day after Luther's arrival, an Italian courtier, Urban of Serra Longa - a creature of the cardinal's, though he took care not to say so - presented himself at the door of the monastery where Luther lodged. He made unbounded professions of friendship for the doctor of Wittenberg, and had come, he said, to give him a piece of advice before appearing in the presence of De Vio. A greater contrast it is impossible to imagine than that between the smiling, bowing, and voluble Italian, and the bluff but honest German.

The advice of Urban was expressed in a single word - "Submit. Surely he had not come this long way to break a lance with the cardinal: of course he had not. He spoke, he presumed, to a wise man."

Luther hinted that the matter was not so plain as his adviser took it to be. "Oh," continued the Italian, with a profusion of politeness., [276] "I understand: you have posted up 'Theses;' you have preached sermons, you have sworn oaths; but three syllables, just six letters, will do the business - Revoco."

"If I am convinced out of the Sacred Scriptures," rejoined Luther, "that I have erred, I shall be but too glad to retract."

The Italian Urban opened his eyes somewhat widely when he heard the monk appeal to a Book which had long ceased to be read or believed in at the metropolis of Christendom. But surely, he thought, Luther will not be so fanatical as to persist in putting the authority of the Bible in opposition to that of the Pope; and so the courtier continued.

“The Pope,” he said, “can by a single nod change or suppress articles of faith, ¹ and surely you must feel yourself safe when you have the Pope on your side, more especially when emolument, position, and life might all lie on your coming to the same conclusion with his Holiness.” He exhorted him not to lose a moment in tearing down his “Theses” and recalling his oaths.

Urban of Serra Longa had overshot the mark. Luther found it necessary to tell him yet more plainly that the thing was impossible, unless the cardinal should convince him by arguments drawn from the Word of God that he had taught false doctrine.

That a single monk, nay, that a whole army of monks should stand up to contest a matter with Rome, appeared to the supple Italian an astounding prodigy. The thing was incomprehensible to him. The doctor of Wittemberg appeared to the courtier a man bent on his own ruin. “What!” continued the Italian, “do you imagine that any princes or lords will protect you against the Holy See? What support can you have? Where will you remain?”

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“I shall still have heaven,” answered Luther. ² Luther saw through this man’s disguise, despite his craft, and his protestations of regard, and perceived him to be an emissary of the legate, sent to sound and it might be to entrap him. He therefore became more reserved, and dismissed his loquacious visitor with the assurance that he would show all humility when he appeared before the cardinal, and would retract what was proved to be erroneous. Thereupon Urban, promising to return and conduct him into the legate’s presence, went back to the man from whom he had come, to tell him how he had failed in his errand.

Augsburg was one of the chief cities of the Empire, and Luther was encouraged by finding that even here his doctrines had made

¹L. Opp., 1. 144. D’Aubigne, 1. 372.

²Tischreden, 370 - 380. Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 16, p. 45.

considerable way. Many of the more honorable councilors of the city waited upon him, invited him to their tables, inquired into his matters; and when they learned that he had come to Augsburg without a safe-conduct, they could not help expressing their astonishment at his boldness - "a gentle name," said Luther, "for rashness." These friends with one accord entreated him on no account to venture into the legate's presence without a safe-conduct, and they undertook to procure one for him from the emperor, who was still in the neighborhood hunting. Luther deemed it prudent to follow their advice; they knew De Vio better than he did, and their testimony regarding him was not assuring. Accordingly, when Urban returned to conduct him to the audience of the cardinal, Luther had to inform him that he must first obtain a safe-conduct. The Italian affected to ridicule the idea of such a thing; it was useless; it would spoil all; the legate was gentleness itself. "Come," he urged, "come, and let us have the matter settled off-hand; one little word will do it," he repeated, imagining that he had found a spell before which all difficulties must give way; "one little word - Revoco." But Luther was immovable: "Whenever I have a safe-conduct I shall appear." The grimacing Italian was compelled to put up with his repulse, and, biting his finger,³ he returned to tell the legate that his mission had sped even worse the second than the first time.

At length a safe-conduct was obtained, and the 11th of October was fixed for Luther's appearance before De Vio. Dr. Link, of Nuremberg, and some other friends, accompanied him to the palace of the legate. On his entrance the Italian courtiers crowded round him, eager to have "a peep at the Erostratus who had kindled such a conflagration." Many pressed in after him to the hall of audience, to be the witnesses of his submission, for however courageous at Wittenberg, they never doubted that the monk would be pliant enough when he stood before the Roman purple.

The customary ceremonies over, a pause ensued. The monk and the cardinal looked at each other in silence: Luther because, having been cited, he expected Cajetan to speak first; and the cardinal because he deemed it impossible that Luther would appear in his

³"Tam ille, gestu Italico mordens digitum, dixit, Hem." (Then he, after the Italian fashion biting his finger, said, Hem.) - Seckendorf.

presence with any other intention than that of retracting. He was to find that in this he was mistaken.

It was a moment of supreme interest. The new age now stood face to face with the old. Never before had the two come into such close contact. There sat the old, arrayed in the purple and other insignia of an ancient and venerable authority: there stood the new, in a severe simplicity, as befitted a power which had come to abolish an age of ceremony and form, and bring in one of spirit and life. Behind the one was seen a long vista of receding centuries, with their traditions, their edicts, and their Popes. Behind the other came a future, which was as yet a "sealed book," for the opening of which all men now waited - some in terror, others in hope; but all in awe, no one knowing what that future might bring, and the boldest not daring to imagine even the half of what it was destined to bring - the laws it was to change; the thrones and altars it was to cast down; the kingdoms it was to overturn, breaking in pieces the strong, and lifting up the weak to dominion and glory. No wonder that these two powers, when brought for the first time into the immediate presence of each other, paused before opening a conflict from which issues so vast were to spring.

Finding that the legate still kept silence, Luther spoke: "Most worthy Father, in obedience to the summons of his Papal Holiness, and in compliance with the orders of my gracious Lord the Elector of Saxony, I appear before you as a submissive and dutiful son of the Holy Christian Church, and acknowledge that I have published the propositions and theses ascribed to me. I am ready to listen most obediently to my accusation, and if I have erred, to submit to instruction in the truth." These words were the first utterance of the Reformation before a bar where in after-times its voice was to be often heard.

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De Vio thought this an auspicious commencement. A submission was not far off. So, putting on a very gracious air, and speaking with condescending kindness, he said that he had only three things to ask of his dear son: first, that he would retract his errors; secondly, that he would abstain in future from promulgating his opinions; and thirdly, that he would avoid whatever might tend to disturb the peace

of the Church.⁴ The proposal, with a little more circumlocution, was precisely that which his emissary had already presented - "Retract."

Luther craved that the Papal brief might be read, in virtue of which the legate had full powers to treat of this matter.

The courtiers opened their eyes in astonishment at the monk's boldness; but the cardinal, concealing his anger, intimated with a wave of his hand that this request could not be granted.

"Then," replied Luther, "deign, most reverend Father, to point out to me wherein I have erred." The courtiers were still more astonished, but Cajetan remained unruffled. The legate took up the "Theses" of Luther: "Observe," said he, "in the seventh proposition you deny that the Sacrament can profit one unless he has faith; and in your fifty-eighth proposition you deny that the merits of Christ form part of that treasure from which the Pope grants indulgences to the faithful."

5

These both were heinous errors in the estimation of Rome. The power of regenerating men by the *opus operatum* - that is, the simple giving of the Sacrament to them, irrespective altogether of the disposition of the recipient - is a mighty power, and invests her clergy with boundless influence. If, by the mere performance or the non-performance of a certain act, they can save men or can destroy men, there is no limit to the obedience they may exact, and no limit to the wealth that will flow in upon them. And so of indulgences. If the Pope has a treasury of infinite merit on which he can draw for the pardon of men's sins, all will come to him, and will pay him his price, how high soever he may choose to fix it. But explode these two dogmas; prove to men that without faith, which is the gift not of the Pope but of God, the Sacrament is utterly without efficacy - an empty sign, conferring neither grace now nor meetness for heaven hereafter - and that the Pope's treasury of inexhaustible merits is a pure fiction; and who after that will bestow a penny in buying Sacraments which contain no grace, and purchasing pardons which convey no forgiveness?

This was precisely what Luther had done. His "Theses" had broken the spell which opened to Rome the wealth of Europe. She

⁴Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 18, p. 46. Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 7.

⁵Pallavicino, tom. 1, lib. 1, cap. 9, p. 53. Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 18, p. 46.

saw at a glance the whole extent of the damage: her markets forsaken, her wares unsaleable, and the streams of gold which had flowed to her from all countries dried up. Cardinal Cajetan, therefore, obeying instructions from head-quarters, put his finger upon those two most damaging points of the "Theses," and demanded of Luther an unconditional retractation of them.

"You must revoke both these errors," said De Vio, "and embrace the true doctrine of the Church."

"That the man who receives the holy Sacrament must have faith in the grace offered him," said Luther, "is a truth I never can and never will revoke."

"Whether you will or no," returned the legate, getting angry, "I must have your recantation this very day, or for this one error I shall condemn all your propositions."

"But," replied the professor of Wittemberg, with equal decision, though with great courteousness, "I demand proof from Scripture that I am wrong; it is on Scripture that my views rest."

But no proof from Scripture could the Reformer get. The cardinal could only repeat the common-places of Rome, re-affirm the doctrine of the *opus operatum*, and quote one of the Extravagants of Clement VI. ⁶ Luther, indignant at seeing what stress the legate laid on a Papal decree, exclaimed, "I cannot admit any such constitution in proof of matters so weighty as those in debate. These interpretations put Scripture to the torture."

[280] "Do you not know," rejoined De Vio, "that the Pope has authority

⁶Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 9, pp. 53 - 55. The cardinal founded this on the well-known decree of Clement VI. Boniface VIII. ordained a jubilee every hundredth year. Clement VI. shortened the term to fifty years; but lest men should think that this frequent recurrence of the year of grace would empty the treasury whence all the blessings bestowed in that year proceed, the Pope showed them that this calamity could not possibly happen. "One drop of Christ's blood," he said, "would have sufficed for the salvation of the whole world; but Christ shed all his blood, constituting thereby a vast treasury of merits, the distribution of which has been given to the Divine Peter [Divo Petro] and his successors. To this have been added the merits of the Virgin Mary and all the saints, making the material of pardon [condoni materies] literally inexhaustible." Luther maintained that Christ had committed to Peter and his successors the keys and ministry of the Word, whereby they were empowered to declare the remission of their sins to the penitent; and that if this was the meaning of Pope Clement's decretal, he agreed with it; but if not, he disapproved of it. (Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 9.)

and power over these things?” “Save Scripture,” said Luther eagerly. “Scripture!” said the cardinal derisively, “the Pope is above Scripture, and above Councils.”⁷ Know you not that he has condemned and punished the Council of Basle?” “But,” responded Luther, “the University of Paris has appealed.” “And the Parisian gentlemen,” said De Vio, “will pay the penalty.”

Luther saw plainly that at this rate they would never arrive at a settlement of the matter. The legate sat in state, treating the man before him with affected condescension, but real contempt. When Luther quoted Scripture in proof of his doctrine, the only answer he received from the cardinal was a shrug of his shoulders, or a derisive laugh. The legate, despite his promise to reason the matter out on the foundation of the Word of God, would not, or perhaps could not, meet Luther on that ground.⁸ He kept exclusively by the decretals and the schoolmen. Glad, perhaps, to escape for the present from a controversy which was not so manageable as he had hoped to find it, he offered to give the doctor of Wittemberg a day for deliberation, but intimated at the same time that he would accept of nothing but a retraction. So ended the first interview.

On returning to his convent his delight was great to find his valued friend Staupitz, the Vicar-General of the Augustines, who had followed him to Augsburg, in the hope of being serviceable to him at this crisis. On the morning when Luther returned to his second interview with the cardinal, the Vicar-General and four imperial councilors accompanied him, along with many other friends, a notary, and witnesses. After the customary obeisance, Luther read a paper, protesting that he honoured and followed the Holy Roman Church; that he submitted himself to the judgment and determination of that Church; that he was ready here present to answer in writing whatever objection the legate of the Pope might produce against him; and, moreover, that he was willing to submit his “Theses” to the judgment of the Imperial Universities of Basle, Fribourg, and Louvain, and, if these were not enough, of Paris - from of old ever the most Christian, and in theology ever the most flourishing university.⁹

⁷Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 7.

⁸Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 18, p. 47.

⁹Pallavicino, tom. 1, lib. 1, cap. 9, p. 54.

The legate evidently had some difficulty in knowing what to reply to these reasonable and manly proposals. He tried to conceal his embarrassment under an affected pity for the monk. "Leave off," he said, in accents of great mildness, "these senseless counsels, and return to your sound mind. Retract, my son, retract." Luther once more appealed to the authority of Scripture, but De Vio becoming somewhat ruffled, the conference ended, after Staupitz had craved and obtained leave for Luther to put his views in writing.¹⁰

At the third and last interview, the doctor of Wittemberg read a full statement of his views on all the points which had been under consideration. He maintained all his former positions, largely fortifying them by quotations from Augustine and other early Fathers, but more especially from Holy Writ.¹¹ The cardinal could not help, even on the judgment-seat, displaying his irritation and chagrin. Drawing himself up in his robes, he received the "declaration" with a look of contempt, and pronounced it "mere words," "a long phylactery;" but said that he would send the paper to Rome. Meanwhile the legate threatened him with the penalties enacted by the Pope unless he retracted.¹² He offered Luther, somewhat earnestly, a safe-conduct, if he would go to Rome and there be judged. The Reformer knew what this meant. It was a safe-conduct to a dungeon somewhere in the precincts of the Vatican. The proffered favor was declined, much to the annoyance of De Vio, who thought, no doubt, that this was the best way of terminating an affair which had tarnished the Roman purple, but lent eclat to the monk's serge.

This was a great crisis in the history of Protestantism, and we breathe more freely when we find it safely passed. Luther had not yet sounded the Papal dogmas to the bottom. He had not as yet those clear and well-defined views to which fuller investigation conducted him. He still believed the office of Pope to be of Divine appointment, and while condemning the errors of the man, was disposed to bow to the authority of his office. There was risk of concessions which would have hampered him in his future course, or have totally wrecked his cause. From this he was saved, partly by his loyalty to his own convictions, partly also by the perception on the

¹⁰Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 9, p. 54.

¹¹Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 8.

¹²Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 9, p. 54. Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 8.

part of the theologians of Rome that the element of "faith," on which Luther so strenuously insisted, constituted an essential and eternal difference between his system and theirs. It substituted a Divine for a human agency, the operation of the Holy Spirit for the opus operatum. On such a point there could be no reconciliation on the basis of mutual concession, and this led them to insist on absolute and unconditional retractation. Luther used to say that he "did not learn all his divinity at once, but was constrained to sink deeper and deeper. The Pope said, 'Although Christ be the Head of the Church, yet notwithstanding there must be a visible and corporeal head of the Church on earth.' With this I could have been well content, in case he had but taught the Gospel purely and clearly, and had not brought forward human inventions and lies instead thereof." ¹³

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So ended the first conflict between the old and the new powers. The victory remained with the latter. This was no small gain. Besides, the two men had been able to take each the measure of the other.

Luther had looked through and through Cajetan. He was astonished to find how weak a polemic and how flimsy a theologian was the champion to whom Rome had committed her battle. "One may guess from this," wrote Luther to Spalatin, "what is the calibre of those of ten times or a hundred times lower rank." The Reformer went forth ever after to meet Rome's mighty men with less anxiety touching the issue. But the cardinal had formed no contemptuous opinion of the monk, although he could find none but contemptuous epithets in which to speak of him. "I will have no more disputing with that beast," said he, when Staupitz pressed him to debate the matter once more with the doctor of Wittemberg, "for he has deep eyes and wonderful speculation in his head." ¹⁴

¹³Table Talk.

¹⁴Myconius, *Hist. Reform.*, p. 73. Gerdesius, *Evan. Renov.*, tom. 1, p. 227.

Chapter 13: Luther's Return to Wittenberg and Labours there

Luther Writes to the Cardinal, and Leaves Augsburg—His Journey—The Pope's Bull Condemning him—Luther's Protestation—De Vio's Rage—Luther Enters Wittenberg—Cajetan's Letter to Elector Frederick—Frederick's Reply—Luther's Account of the Conference—Activity in the University—Study of the Bible—The Pope's Bull on Indulgences—Luther Appeals from the Pope to the Church—Frederick Requests Luther to Leave Saxony—Whither shall he Go?—Supper with his Friends—Anguish and Courage

Picture: Frederick III., Elector of Saxony, surnamed "The Wise"

Picture: Luther Escaping from Augsburg

Two days had passed since the legate had bidden Luther "be gone, and see his face no more, unless he changed his mind."¹ After leaving the cardinal's presence, Luther wrote him a letter (October 16th) in which, although he retracted nothing, he expressed great respect and submission. The cardinal returned no answer to this. What did his silence mean? "It bodes no good," said Luther's friends; "he is concocting some plot with the emperor; we must be beforehand with him."

In fact, Cajetan did not need to consult the emperor or any one else. He had received instructions from his master at Rome in view of the possible miscarriage of his mission. If he delayed to put these instructions in force, it was because he thought he had snared his victim: the walls of Augsburg had shut him in.

The trap was not quite so sure as the cardinal deemed it. Mounted on a horse, provided for him by his friends, a trusty guide by his side, Luther is traversing before dawn the silent streets of Augsburg. He is escaping from the cardinal. He approaches a small gate in the city walls. A friendly hand opens it, and he passes out into the open

¹Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 8.

country.² This was on the morning of the fourth day (October 20th) after his last interview.

Behind him is the sleeping city, before him is the champaign country, just beginning to be visible in the early daybreak. In what direction shall he turn his horse's head? He stands a moment uncertain. The French ambassador had mentioned his name with favor at the late Diet; may he not expect protection in his master's dominions? His hand is on his bridle-rein to direct his flight to France. But no; he turns northward. It was Wittemberg, not Paris, that was destined to be the center of the new movement.

The two travelers rode away at what speed they could. Luther was but little accustomed to the saddle, the horse he rode was a hard trotter, and so overcome by fatigue was he, that when he arrived at the end of his first stage, unable to stand upright, he lay down upon the straw in the stable of the hostelry where he was to pass the night.³ On arriving at Nuremberg, he read for the first time the directions forwarded from Rome to De Vio, touching the way in which himself and his cause were to be disposed of.⁴ These showed him that he had left Augsburg not a moment too soon, and that during his stay there a sword had all the while been hanging above his head.

The Papal brief - in the hands of the legate when he sat down on the judgment-seat - enjoined him to compel Luther to retract. From Rome, then, had come the one word *Revoco*, which Serra Longa first, and Cajetan next, dictated as that which Luther was contritely to utter. If he could be brought to retract, and to beg forgiveness for the disturbance he had made, and the scandal he had caused to the hierarchy, the legate was empowered to "receive him into the unity of our Holy Mother the Church." But if the monk should prove obstinate, De Vio was to use summary and sharp measures to have the business ended. He was to seize the person of Luther, and keep him in safe custody, that he might be sent to Rome. To effect this, should it be necessary, the legate was to demand the aid of the emperor, of the princes of Germany, and of all the communities and potentates ecclesiastical and secular. If, notwithstanding, Luther should escape, he was to proscribe him in every part of Germany, and

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²Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 18, p. 49.

³Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec 18, p. 49.

⁴Ibid., p. 51.

lay under interdict all those princes, communities, universities, and potentates, with their cities, towns, countries, and villages, which should offer him an asylum, or in any way befriend him.⁵

Even before the summons to appear before De Vio had been put into Luther's hands, his cause had been adjudged and himself condemned as a heretic in a Papal court, that of Jerome, Bishop of Ascoli. Of this Luther knew nothing when he set out for Augsburg. When he learned it he exclaimed, "Is this the style and fashion of the Roman court, which in the same day summons, exhorts, accuses, judges, condemns, and declares a man guilty, who is so far from Rome, and who knows nothing of all these things?" The danger was passed before he knew its full extent; but when he saw it he gave thanks with his whole soul to God for his escape. The angel of the Lord had encamped round about him and delivered him.

Like the Parthian, Luther discharged his arrows as he fled. He did not leave Augsburg without leaving behind him something that would speak for him when he was gone; and not in Augsburg only, but in all Christendom. He penned an appeal to Rome. In that document he recapitulated the arguments with which he had combated indulgences, and characterized the cardinal's procedure as unreasonable, in insisting on a retraction without deigning to show him wherein he had erred. He had not yet renounced the authority of the Pope: he still revered the chair of Peter, though disgraced by mal-administrations, and therefore he closed his appeal in the following terms: - "I appeal from the Most Holy Father the Pope, ill-informed, to the Most Holy Father the Pope Leo X., by the grace of God to be better-informed."⁶

This appeal was to be handed to the legate only when the writer was at a safe distance. But the question was, who should bell the cat. De Vio was in no mood to be approached with such a document. The cardinal burned with a sense of the disaster which had befallen himself and the cause of Rome, in Luther's flight. He, and all the men of craft, his advisers, had been outwitted by the German! He had failed to compel the retraction of the monk; his person was now beyond his reach; and he carried with him the prestige of victory;

⁵Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 9, p. 52.

⁶Luth. Opp., tom. 1, p. 232. Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 9. Paul. Sarpi, tom. 1, livr. 1, p. 23 (foot-note).

Rome had been foiled in this her first passage of arms with the new faith; the cardinal, who hoped to rehabilitate himself as a diplomatist, had come out of the affair as a bungler: what would they say of him at Rome? The more he reflected, the greater appeared to him the mischief that would grow out of this matter. He had secretly exulted when told that Luther was in Augsburg; but better the monk had never entered its gates, than that he should come hither to defy Rome in the person of her legate, and go away, not only unharmed, but even triumphing. The cardinal was filled with indignation, shame, and rage.

Meanwhile Luther was every day placing a greater distance between himself and the legate. The rumor spread through Germany that the monk had held his own before the cardinal, and the inhabitants of the villages and towns in his route turned out to congratulate him on his victory. Their joy was the greater inasmuch as their hopes had been but faint that he should ever return. Germany had triumphed in Luther. Proud Italy, who sent her dogmas and edicts across the Alps, to be swallowed without examination, and who followed them by her tax-gatherers, had received a check. That haughty and oppressive Power had begun to fall, and the dawn of deliverance had broke for the Northern nations.

Luther re-entered Wittemberg on the day (October 30th, 1518) preceding the anniversary of that on which he had posted up his "Theses." The 1st of November was All Saints' Day. There came this year no crowd of pilgrims to Wittemberg to visit the relics and purchase indulgences. So much for the blow Luther had struck: the trade of Rome in these parts had well-nigh been ruined; it was manifest that the doctrines of the Reformer were spreading.

But if the crowd of pilgrims that annually resorted to Wittemberg was all but extinct, that of students had greatly increased. With the growing renown of Luther grew the fame of the university, and the Elector Frederick saw with joy the prosperity of a seminary in which he took so deep an interest. This helped to draw him to the side of the Reformer. Luther resumed, with heart and soul, his labours in his chair. He strove to forget what Rome might be hatching; he knew that trouble was not far off; but meanwhile he went on with his work, being all the more anxious to make the best use of the interval of quiet, the more he felt that it would be short.

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It was short indeed. On November the 19th Frederick of Saxony received a letter from Cardinal Cajetan, giving his version of the interviews at Augsburg,⁷ and imploring the elector no longer to sully the fame of his name and the glory of his house by protecting a heretic, whom the tribunals of Rome were prosecuting, and of whom and of whose affairs he had now and for ever washed his hands. The result of this application was the more to be dreaded inasmuch as Frederick was as yet ignorant of the reformed doctrine. But he well merited the epithet bestowed on him of “Wise;” in all things he acted with consideration and candor, and he might be expected to do so in this. The elector had no sooner received the legate’s letter than, desirous of hearing both sides, he sent it to Luther.⁸ The latter gave Frederick his account of the affair, dwelling on Cajetan’s promise, which he had not kept, to convince him out of Scripture; the unreasonableness of his demand, that he should retract, and the gross and manifest perversion of those passages from Sacred Writ on which, in his letter to the elector, Cajetan had professed to ground his cause; and all with such clearness, force, and obvious truth, that Frederick resolved not to abandon Luther. He knew his virtues, though he did not understand his doctrines, and he knew the grievances that Germany groaned under from Italian pride and Papal greed. The reply of Frederick to De Vio was in reality the same with that of Luther - “Prove the errors which you allege” - a reply which deepened the mortification and crowned the misfortunes of the cardinal.

To the unhappy De Vio, and the cause which he represented, one calamity followed another in rapid succession. The day following that on which the Elector Frederick dispatched his letter to the legate, Luther’s narrative of the Augsburg interview, which he had been some time carefully preparing, issued from the press. The elector had requested Luther to withhold it for a little while, and the Reformer was firmly purposed to do so. But the eagerness of the public and the cupidity of the printers overreached his caution. The printing-house was besieged by a crowd of all ranks and ages, clamoring for copies. The sheets were handed out wet from the press, and as each sheet

⁷Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 11, pp. 58, 59. Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 10.

⁸Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 11. Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 11, pp. 59, 60.

was produced a dozen hands were stretched out to clutch it. The author was the last person to see his own production. In a few days the pamphlet was spread far and near.

Luther had become not the doctor of Wittenberg only, but of all Germany. The whole nation, not less than the youth in the university, had been drawn into the study of theology. Through the printing-press Luther's voice reached every hearth and every individual in the Fatherland. It was a new life that men were breathing; it was a new world that was opening to their eyes; it was a new influence, unfelt for ages, that was stirring their souls; the ancient yoke was being broken and cast away. In the university especially the theology of the Holy Scriptures was being studied with an ardour and a perseverance to which we can find in later times no parallel. Professors and students, kindled with the enthusiasm of Luther, if they could not keep pace with, strove to follow him as closely as possible. "Our university," wrote Luther, "glows with industry like an ant-hill." With each new day came a new batch of students, till the halls of the university and the accommodation at Wittenberg overflowed. Not from Germany only, but from far countries, came these youths to receive here the seed of a reformed life, and to bear it thence and scatter it over regions remote.

Great attention was given to the study of Hebrew and Greek, "the two languages which, like porters, sit at the entrance of the Bible, holding the keys." From the university the passion for theological study passed to the court. The elector's secretary, Spalatin, in his correspondence with Luther, was perpetually asking and receiving expositions of Scripture, and it was believed that behind the secretary's shadow sat the elector himself, quietly but earnestly prosecuting that line of inquiry which was ultimately to place him by the side of Luther.

Meanwhile the plot was thickening. The tidings of Cajetan's "victory," as he himself phrased it, had reached Rome; but the news of that "victory" caused only consternation. The cannon of St. Angelo, which have proclaimed so many triumphs before and since, forbore to proclaim this one. There were gloomy looks and anxious deliberations in the halls of the Vatican. Rome must repair the disaster that had befallen her; but here, too, fatality attended her steps. She could have done nothing better to serve the cause of

Luther than the course she took to oppose it. Serra Longa had blundered, De Vio had blundered, and now Leo X. blunders worst of all. It seemed as if the master wished to obliterate the mistakes of his servants by his own greater mistakes.

[286] On November 9 the Pontiff issued a new decretal, in which he sanctioned afresh the doctrine of indulgences, and virtually confirmed all that Tetzel first and Cardinal Cajetan next had taught on the head of the Church's power to pardon sin. The edict ran as follows: - "That the Roman Church, the mother of all Churches, had handed down by tradition that the Roman Pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, by the power of the keys - that is, by removing the guilt and punishment due for actual sins by indulgence - can for reasonable causes grant to the faithful of Christ, whether in this life or in purgatory, indulgences out of the superabundance of the merits of Christ and the saints; can confer the indulgence by absolution, or transfer it by suffrage. And all those who have acquired indulgences, whether alive or dead, are released from so much temporal punishment for their actual sins as is the equivalent of the acquired indulgence. This doctrine is to be held and preached by all, under penalty of excommunication, from which only the Pope can absolve, save at the point of death."⁹ This bull was sent to Cajetan, who was then living at Linz, in Upper Austria, whence copies were despatched by him to all the bishops of Germany, with injunctions to have it published.

The weight that belonged to the utterance of Peter's successor would, the Pope believed, overwhelm and silence the monk of Wittenberg; and, the conscience of Christendom set at rest, men would return to their former quiescence under the scepter of the Vatican. He little understood the age on which he was entering, and the state of public feeling and sentiment north of the Alps. The age was past when men would bow down implicitly before sheets of parchment and bits of lead. Wherein, men asked, does the Pope's teaching on indulgences differ from Tetzel's, unless in the greater decency of its language? The doctrine is the same, only in the one case it is written in the best Latin they are now masters of at Rome, whereas in the other it is proclaimed with stentorian voice in the coarsest

⁹Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 12, p. 62. Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 12. Paul. Sarpi, Hist. Conc. Trent, tom. 1, livr. 1, p. 22.

Saxon. But plain it is that the Pope as really as Tetzal brings the money-chest to our doors, and expects that we shall fill it. He vaunts his treasure of merits, but it is as the chapman vaunts his wares, that we may buy; and the more we sin, the richer will they be at Rome. Money - money - money, is the beginning, middle, and end of this new decretal. It was in this fashion that the Germans spoke of the edict of November 9, which was to bolster up Cajetan and extinguish Luther. The Pope had exonerated Tetzal, but it was at the expense of taking the whole of this immense scandal upon himself and his system. The chief priest of Christendom presented himself before the world holding the bag with as covetous a grip as any friar of them all.

In another way the decree of the Pope helped to overthrow the system it was meant to uphold. It compelled Luther to go deeper than he had yet ventured to do in his investigations into the Papacy. He now looked at its foundations. The doctrine of indulgences in its sacrilegious and blasphemous form he had believed to be the doctrine of Tetzal only; now he saw it to be the doctrine of Leo of Rome as well. Leo had endorsed Tetzal's and Cajetan's interpretation of the matter. The conclusion to which Luther's studies were tending is indicated in a letter which he wrote about this time to his friend Wenceslaus Link at Nuremberg: "The conviction is daily growing upon me," says he, "that the Pope is Antichrist." And when Spalatin inquired what he thought of war against the Turk - "Let us begin," he replied, "with the Turk at home; it is fruitless to fight carnal wars and be overcome in spiritual wars."¹⁰

The conclusion was in due time reached. The Reformer drew up another appeal, and on Sunday, the 28th of November, he read it aloud in Corpus Christi Chapel, in the presence of a notary and witnesses. "I appeal," he said, "from the Pontiff, as a man liable to error, sin, falsehood, vanity, and other human infirmities - not above Scripture, but under Scripture - to a future Council to be legitimately convened in a safe place, so that a proctor deputed by me may have safe access." This appeal marks a new stage in Luther's enlightenment. The Pope is, in fact, abjured: Luther no

¹⁰Letter, December 21, 1518. De Wette, 1, p. 200.

longer appeals from Leo ill-informed to Leo well-informed,¹¹ but from the Papal authority itself to that of a General Council, from the head of the Church to the Church herself.¹²

[287] So closed the year 1518. The sky overhead was thick with tempest. The cloud grew blacker and bigger every day. The Reformer had written the appeal read in Corpus Christi Chapel on the 28th of November, as the Israelites ate their last supper in Egypt, "his robe tucked up and his loins girded, ready to depart," though whither he knew not. He only knew that he could go nowhere where God would not be his "shield, and exceeding great reward." The Papal anathemas he knew were being prepared at Rome; they were not, improbably, at this moment on their way to Germany. Not because he feared for himself, but because he did not wish to compromise the Elector Frederick, he held himself ready at a day's notice to quit Saxony. His thoughts turned often to France. The air seemed clearer there, and the doctors of the Sorbonne spoke their thoughts with a freedom unknown to other countries; and had Luther been actually compelled to flee, most probably he would have gone to that country. And now the die was cast as it seemed. The elector sent a message to him, intimating his wishes that he should quit his dominions. He will obey, but before going forth he will solace himself, most probably for the last time, in the company of his friends. While seated with them at supper, a messenger arrives from the elector. Frederick wishes to know why Luther delays his departure. What a pang does this message send to his heart! What a sense of sadness and desolation does he now experience! On earth he has no protector. There is not for him refuge below the skies. The beloved friends assembled round him - Jonas, Pomeranus, Carlstadt, Amsdorf, the jurist Schurff, and, dearest of all, Melancthon - are drowned in grief, almost in despair, as they behold the light of their university on the point of being quenched, and the great movement which promises a new life to the world on the brink of overthrow. So sudden an overcasting of the day they had not looked for. They waited for light, and behold darkness! No prince in all Christendom, no, not even their own wise and magnanimous elector, dare give an asylum to the

¹¹"Ben informato." (Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 12, p. 62.)

¹²Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 12.

man who in the cause of righteousness has stood up against Rome.¹³ It was a bitter cup that Luther was now drinking. He must go forth. His enemy, he knew, would pursue him from land to land, and would never cease to dog his steps till she had overtaken and crushed him. But it was not this that troubled him. His soul, the only thing of value about him, he had committed to One who was able to keep it; and as for his body, it was at the disposal of Rome, to rot in her dungeons, to hang on her gibbets, to be reduced to ashes in her fires, just as she might will. He would have gone singing to the stake, but to go forth and leave his country in darkness, this it was that pierced him to the heart, and drew from him a flood of bitter tears.

¹³L. Epp., 1. 188 - 193. D'Aubigne, bk. 4, chap. 11.

Chapter 14: Miltitz - Carlstadt - Dr. Eck

Miltitz—Of German Birth—Of Italian Manners—His Journey into Germany—The Golden Rose—His Interview with Luther—His Flatteries—A Truce—Danger—The War Resumed—Carlstadt and Dr. Eck—Disputation at Leipsic—Character of Dr. Eck—Entrance of the Two Parties into Leipsic—Place and Forms of the Disputation—Its Vast Importance—Portrait of the Disputants

Picture: Luther's Pamphlet: Scene at the Printing-house

Picture: View of Mainz

We left Luther dispirited to the last degree. A terrible storm seemed to be gathering over him, and over the work which he had been honoured to begin, and so far auspiciously to advance. He had incurred the displeasure of a foe who had at command all the powers of Europe. Maximilian, Emperor of Germany, seemed even more intent on crushing the monk of Wittemberg, and stamping out the movement, than Leo himself was. Letter after letter did he dispatch to Rome chiding the delays of the Vatican, and urging it to toy no longer with a movement which threatened to breed serious trouble to the chair of Peter. The Pope could not close his ear to appeals so urgent, coming from a quarter so powerful. The Elector Frederick, Luther's earthly defender, was standing aloof. Wittemberg could no longer be the home of the Reformer. He had taken farewell of his congregation; he had spoken his parting words to the youth who had gathered round him from all the provinces of Germany, and from distant countries; he had bidden adieu to his weeping friends, and now he stood, staff in hand, ready to go forth he knew not whither, when all at once the whole face of affairs was unexpectedly changed.

Rome was not yet prepared to proceed to extremities. She had not fully fathomed the depth of the movement. Scarce an age was there in the past, but some rebellious priest had threatened his sovereign lord, but all such attempts against the Pontiff had been in vain. The Wittemberg movement would, like a tempest, exhaust itself, and the

waves would dash harmlessly against the rock of the Church. True, the attempts of Leo to compose the Wittenberg troubles had so far been without result, or rather had made the matter worse; but, like the conjurer in the tale, Rome had not one only, but a hundred tricks; she had diplomatists to flatter, and she had red hats to dazzle those whom it might not be convenient as yet to burn, and so she resolved on making one other trial at conciliation. ¹

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The person pitched upon to conduct the new operation was Charles Miltitz. Cajetan was too stately, too haughty, too violent; Miltitz was not likely to split on this rock. He was the chamberlain of the Pope: a Saxon by birth, but he had resided so long at Rome as to have become a proficient in Italian craft, to which he added a liking for music. ² The new envoy was much more of a diplomatist than a theologian. This, however, did not much matter, seeing he came not to discuss knotty points, but to lavish caresses and lay snares. As he was a German by birth, it was supposed he would know how to manage the Germans.

Miltitz's errand to Saxony was not avowed. He did not visit the elector's court on Luther's business; not at all. He was the bearer from the Pope to Frederick of the "golden rose," ³ a token of regard which the Pope granted only to the most esteemed of his friends, and being solicitous that Frederick should believe himself of that number, and knowing that he was desirous of receiving this special mark of Papal affection, ⁴ he sent Miltitz this long road, with the precious and much-coveted gift. Being on the spot he might as well try his hand at arranging "brother Martin's" business. But no one was deceived. "The Pope's chamberlain comes," said Luther's friends to him, "laden with flattering letters and Pontifical briefs, the cords with which he hopes to bind you and carry you to Rome." "I await the will of God," replied the Reformer.

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¹Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 14.

²The Germans invited him to their banquets. He forgot himself at table, and verified the maxim, *In vino veritas*. He revealed the scandals of the city and court of Rome. So Paul III. discovered and complained. (See Ranke, also Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 28, p. 78.)

³Sleidan, bk. 1, p. 12. Along with the "rose" to Frederick, he carried a letter from the Pope to Degenart Pfeffinger, one of Frederick's councillors, asking his assistance to enable Miltitz "to expel that son of Satan - Luther." (Sleidan, *ut supra*. Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 24, p. 64.)

⁴Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 24: p. 61.

On his journey Miltitz made it his business to ascertain the state of public feeling on the question now in agitation. He was astonished to find the hold which the opinions of Luther had taken on the German mind. In all companies he entered, in the way-side taverns, in the towns, in the castles where he lodged, he found the quarrel between the monk and the Pope the topic of talk. Of every five Germans three were on the side of Luther. How different the mental state on this side the Alps from the worn-out Italian mind! This prognosticated an approaching emancipation of the young and ingenuous Teutonic intellect from its thralldom to the traditionalism of Italy. At times the Pope's chamberlain received somewhat amusing answers to his interrogatories. One day he asked the landlady of the inn where he had put up, what her opinion was of the chair of Peter? "What can we humble folks," replied the hostess, pawkily, "know of Peter's chair? we have never seen it, and cannot tell whether it be of wood or of stone."⁵

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Miltitz reached Saxony in the end of the year 1518, but his reception at Frederick's court was not of a kind to inspire him with high hopes. The elector's ardour for the "golden rose" had cooled; its fragrance had been spoiled by the late breezes from Augsburg and Rome, and he gave orders that it should be delivered to him through one of the officers of the palace. The letters which Miltitz carried to Spalatin and Pfeffinger, the elector's councilors, though written with great fervor, did but little to thaw the coldness of these statesmen. The envoy must reserve all his strength for Luther himself, that was clear; and he did reserve it, and to such purpose that he came much nearer gaining his point than Cajetan had done. The movement was in less danger when the tempest appeared about to burst over it, than now when the clouds had rolled away, and the sun again shone out.

Miltitz was desirous above all things of having a personal interview with Luther. His wish was at last gratified, and the envoy and the monk met each other in the house of Spalatin at Altenberg.⁶ The courtier exhausted all the wiles of which he was master. He was not civil merely, he was gracious; he fawned upon Luther.⁷ Looking full into his face, he said that he expected to see an old

⁵Luth. Opp. (Lat.) in Praefatio.

⁶Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 24, p. 61.

⁷Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 13, p. 65.

theologian, prosing over knotty points in his chimney-corner; to his delight he saw, instead, a man in the prime of life. He flattered his pride by saying that he believed he had a larger following than the Pope himself, and he sought to disarm his fears by assuring him that, though he had an army of 20,000 men at his back, he would never be so foolish as to think of carrying off one who was so much the idol of the people. ⁸ Luther knew perfectly that it was the courtier who was speaking, and that between the words of the courtier and the deeds of the envoy there might possibly be some considerable difference. But he took care not to let Miltitz know what was passing in his mind.

The envoy now proceeded to business. His touch was adroit and delicate. Tetzels, he said, had gone beyond his commission; he had done the thing scandalously, and he did not greatly wonder that Luther had been provoked to oppose him. Even the Archbishop of Mainz was not without blame, in putting the screw too tightly upon Tetzels as regarded the money part of the business. Still the doctrine of indulgences was a salutary one; from that doctrine the German people had been seduced, and they had been so by the course which he, Luther, had felt it his duty to pursue. Would he not confess that herein he had erred, and restore peace to the Church? - a matter, the envoy assured him, that lay very much upon his heart. ⁹

Luther boldly answered that the chief offender in this business was neither Tetzels nor the Archbishop of Mainz, but the Pope himself, ¹⁰ who, while he might have given the pallium freely, had put upon it a price so exorbitant as to tempt the archbishop to employ Tetzels to get the money for him by hook or by crook. "But as for a retraction," said Luther in a very firm tone, "never expect one from me."

A second and a third interview followed, and Miltitz, despairing of extorting from Luther a recantation, professed to be satisfied with what he could get; and he got more than might have been expected. It is evident that the arts of the envoy, his well-simulated fairness and moderation, and the indignation, not wholly feigned, which he expressed against Tetzels, had not been without their effect upon the

⁸Luth. Opp. (Lat.) in Praefatio.

⁹Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 14, p. 66.

¹⁰Ibid. "Che la colpa era del Papa."

mind of Luther. The final arrangement come to was that neither side should write or act in the question; that Luther should revoke upon proof of his errors, and that the matter should be referred to the judgment of an enlightened bishop. The umpire ultimately chosen was the Archbishop of Treves. ¹¹

The issue to which the affair had been brought was one that threatened disaster to the cause. It seemed to prelude a shelving of the controversy. It was gone into for that very purpose. The “Theses” will soon be forgotten; the Tetzal scandal will fade from the public memory; Rome will observe a little more moderation and decency in the sale of indulgences; and when the storm shall have blown over, things will revert to their old course, and Germany will again lie down in her chains. Happily, there was a Greater than Luther at the head of the movement.

[291] Miltitz was overjoyed. This troublesome affair was now at an end; so he thought. His mistake lay in believing the movement to be confined to the bosom of a single monk. He could not see that it was a new life which had come down from the skies, and which was bringing on an awakening in the Church. Miltitz invited Luther to supper. At table, he did not conceal the alarm this matter had caused at Rome. Nothing that had fallen out these hundred years had occasioned so much uneasiness in the Vatican. The cardinals would give “ten thousand ducats” to have it settled, and the news that it was now arranged would cause unbounded joy. The repast was a most convivial one; and when it was ended, the envoy rose, took the monk of Wittemberg in his arms, and kissed him - “a Judas kiss,” said Luther, writing to Staupitz, “but I would not let him perceive that I saw through his Italian tricks.” ¹²

There came now a pause in the controversy. Luther laid aside his pen, he kept silence on indulgences; he busied himself in his chair; but, fortunately for the cause at stake, this pause was of no long duration. It was his enemies that broke the truce. Had they been wise, they would have left the monk in the fetters with which

¹¹Ibid., p. 67.

¹²Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 24, p. 63. “Me accepto convivio, laetati sumus, et osculo mihi dato discessimus” (He received me at supper, we were very happy, and he gave me a kiss at parting). - Item Luth. Opp. (Lat.) in Praefatio.

Miltitz had bound him. Not knowing what they did, they loosed his cords.

This brings us to the Leipsic Disputation, an affair that made a great noise at the time, and which was followed by vast consequences to the Reformation.

Such disputations were common in that age. They were a sort of tournament in which the knights of the schools, like the knights of the Middle Ages, sought to display their prowess and win glory. They had their uses. There were then no public meetings, no platforms, no daily press; and in their absence, these disputations between the learned came in their stead, as arenas for the ventilation of great public questions.

The man who set agoing the movement when it had stopped, thinking to extinguish it, was Doctor John Eccius or Eck. He was famed as a debater all over Europe. He was Chancellor of the University of Ingolstadt; deeply read in the school-men, subtle, sophistical, a great champion of the Papacy, transcendently vain of his dialectic powers, vaunting the triumphs he had obtained on many fields, and always panting for new opportunities of displaying his skill. A fellow-laborer of Luther, Andrew Bodenstein, better known as Carlstadt, Archdeacon of the Cathedral at Wittemberg, had answered the Obelisks of Dr. Eck, taking occasion to defend the opinions of Luther. Eck answered him, and Carlstadt again replied. After expending on each other the then customary amenities of scholastic strife, it was ultimately agreed that the two combatants should meet in the city of Leipsic, and decide the controversy by oral disputation, in the presence of George, Duke of Saxony, uncle of the Elector Frederick, and other princes and illustrious personages.

Before the day arrived for this trial of strength between Carlstadt and Eck, the latter had begun to aim at higher game. To vanquish Carlstadt would bring him but little fame; the object of Eck's ambition was to break a lance with the monk of Wittemberg, "the little monk who had suddenly grown into a giant."¹³ Accordingly, he published thirteen Theses, in which he plainly impugned the opinions of Luther.

¹³"He was as eager to engage this Goliath, who was defying the people of God, as the young volunteer is to join the colors of his regiment." (Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 14, p. 68.)

This violation of the truce on the Roman side set Luther free; and, nothing loth, he requested permission from Duke George to come to Leipsic and take up the challenge which Eck had thrown down to him. The duke, who feared for the public peace, should two such combatants wrestle a fall on his territories, refused the request. Ultimately, however, he gave leave to Luther to come to Leipsic as a spectator; and in this capacity did the doctor of Wittemberg appear on a scene in which he was destined to fill the most prominent place.

It affords a curious glimpse into the manners of the age, to mark the pomp with which the two parties entered Leipsic. Dr. Eck and his friends came first, arriving on the 21st of June, 1519. Seated in a chariot, arrayed in his sacerdotal garments, he made his entry into the city, at the head of a procession composed of the civic and ecclesiastical dignitaries who had come forth to do him honour. He passed proudly along through streets thronged with the citizens, who rushed from their houses to have a sight of the warrior who had unsheathed his scholastic sword on so many fields - in Pannonia, in Lombardy, in Bavaria - and who had never yet returned it into its scabbard but in victory. He was accompanied by Poliander, whom he had brought with him to be a witness of his triumph, but whom Providence designed, by the instrumentality of Luther, to bind to the chariot of the Reformation. There is a skeleton at every banquet, and Eck complains that a report was circulated in the crowd, that in the battle about to begin it would be his fortune to be beaten. The wish in this case certainly was not father to the thought, for the priests and people of Leipsic were to a man on Eck's side.

[292] On the 24th of June the theologians from Wittemberg made their public entry into Leipsic. Heading the procession came Carlstadt, who was to maintain the contest with Eck. Of the distinguished body of men assembled at Wittemberg, Carlstadt was perhaps the most impetuous, but the least profound. He was barely fit to sustain the part which he had chosen to act. He was enjoying the ovation of his entry when, the wheel of his carriage coming off, he suddenly rolled in the mud. The spectators who witnessed his mischance construed it into an omen of a more serious downfall awaiting him, and said that if Eck was to be beaten it was another than Carlstadt who would be the victor.

In the carriage after Carlstadt rode the Duke of Pomerania, and, one on each side of him, sat the two theologians of chief note, Luther and Melancthon. Then followed a long train of doctors-in-law, masters of arts, licentiates in theology, and surrounding their carriages came a body of 200 students bearing pikes and halberds. It was not alone the interest they took in the discussion which brought them hither; they knew that the disposition of the Leipsickers was not over-friendly, and they thought their presence might not be unneeded in guarding their professors from insult and in-jury. ¹⁴

On the morning of the 27th, mass was sung in the Church of St. Thomas. The princes, counts, abbots, councilors, and professors walked to the chapel in procession, marching to the sound of martial music, with banners flying, and accompanied by a guard of nearly 100 citizens, who bore halberds and other weapons. After service they returned in the same order to the ducal castle of Pleisenberg, the great room of which had been fitted up for the disputation. Duke George, the hereditary Prince John of Saxony, the Duke of Pomerania, and Prince John of Anhalt occupied separate and conspicuous seats; the less distinguished of the audience sat upon benches. At each end of the hall rose a wooden pulpit for the use of the disputants. Over that which Luther was to occupy hung a painting of St. Martin, whose name he bore; and above that which had been assigned to Dr. Eck was a representation of St. George trampling the dragon under foot: a symbol, as the learned doctor doubtless viewed it, of the feat he was to perform in slaying with scholastic sword the dragon of the Reformation. In the middle of the hall were tables for the notaries-public, who were to take notes of the discussion.

All are in their places: there is silence in the hall. Mosellanus ascends the pulpit and delivers the introductory address. He exhorts the champions to bear themselves gallantly yet courteously; to remember that they are theologians, not duellists, and that their ambition ought to be not so much to conquer as to be conquered, so that Truth might be the only victor on the field now about to open. ¹⁵ When the address had terminated, the organ pealed through the hall of the Pleisenberg, and the whole assembly, falling on their knees,

¹⁴Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 26, p. 85.

¹⁵Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 26, p. 88.

sang the ancient hymn - Veni, Sancte Spiritus. Three times was this invocation solemnly repeated. ¹⁶

The Church now stood on the line that divided the night from the day. The champions of the darkness and the heralds of the light were still mingled in one assembly, and still united by the tie of one ecclesiastical communion. A little while and they would be parted, never again to meet; but as yet they assemble under the same roof, they bow their heads in the same prayer, and they raise aloft their voices in the same invocation to the Holy Spirit. That prayer was to be answered. The Spirit was to descend; the dead were to draw to the dead, the living to the living, and a holy Church was to look forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners."

It was now past noon. The opening of the discussion was postponed till after dinner. Duke George had prepared a sumptuous repast for the two disputants and their friends, and they accordingly adjourned to the ducal table. At two o'clock they re-assembled in the hall where the disputation was to take place. ¹⁷

The battle was now joined, and it continued to be waged on this and the sixteen following days. The questions discussed were of the very last importance: they were those that lie at the foundations of the two theologies, and that constitute an essential and eternal difference between the Roman and Protestant Churches, in their basis, their character, and their tendencies. The discussion was also of the last importance practically. It enabled the Reformers to see deeper than they had hitherto done into fundamentals. It convinced them that the contrariety between the two creeds was far greater than they had imagined, and that the diversity was not on the surface merely, not in the temporal wealth and spiritual assumptions of the hierarchy merely, not in the scandals of indulgences and the disorders of the Papal court merely, but in the very first principles upon which the Papal system is founded, and that the discussion of these principles leads unavoidably into an examination of the moral and spiritual condition of the race, and the true character of the very first event in human history.

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¹⁶Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁷Ibid.

Before sketching in outline - and an outline is all that has come down to us - this celebrated disputation, it may not be uninteresting to see a pen-and-ink sketch, by an impartial contemporary and eye-witness, of the three men who figured the most prominently in it. The portraits are by Peter Mosellanus, Professor of Greek in the University of Leipsic, the orator who opened the proceedings.

“Martin Luther is of middle stature, and so emaciated by hard study that one might almost count his bones. He is in the rigor of life, and his voice is clear and sonorous. His learning and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures are beyond compare: he has the whole Word of God at command. In addition to this he has great store of arguments and ideas. It were, perhaps, to be wished that he had a little more judgment in arranging his materials. In conversation he is candid and courteous; there is nothing stoical or haughty about him; he has the art of accommodating himself to every individual. His address is pleasing, and replete with good-humor; he displays firmness, and is never discomposed by the menaces of his adversaries, be they what they may. One is, in a manner, to believe that in the great things which he has done God has assisted him. He is blamed, however, for being more sarcastic in his rejoinders than becomes a theologian, especially when he announces new ideas.” “Carlstadt is of smaller stature; his complexion is dark and sallow, his voice disagreeable, his memory less retentive, and his temper more easily ruffled than Luther’s. Still, however, he possesses, though in an inferior degree, the same qualities which distinguish his friend.”

“Eck is tall and broad-shouldered. He has a strong and truly German voice, and such excellent lungs that he would be well heard on the stage, or would make an admirable town-crier. His accent is rather coarse than elegant, and he has none of the gracefulness so much lauded by Cicero and Quintilian. His mouth, his eyes, and his whole figure suggest the idea of a soldier or a butcher rather than a theologian. His memory is excellent, and were his intellect equal to it he would be faultless. But he is slow of comprehension, and wants judgment, without which all other gifts are useless. Hence, when he debates, he piles up, without selection or discernment, passages from the Bible, quotations from the Fathers, and arguments of all descriptions. His assurance, moreover, is unbounded. When he finds himself in a difficulty he darts off from the matter in hand,

and pounces upon another; sometimes, even, he adopts the view of his antagonist, and, changing the form of expression, most dexterously charges him with the very absurdity which he himself was defending.”¹⁸

Such were the three men who now stood ready to engage in battle, as sketched by one who was too thoroughly imbued with the spirit of ancient pagan literature to care about the contest farther than as it might afford him a little amusement or some pleasurable excitement. The eyes of this learned Grecian were riveted on the past. It was the scholars, heroes, and battles of antiquity that engrossed his admiration. And yet what were these but mimic conflicts compared with the tremendous struggle that was now opening, and the giants that were to wrestle in it! The wars of Greece and Rome were but the world’s nursery tales; this war, though Mosellanus knew it not, was the real drama of the race - the true conflict of the ages.

¹⁸Mosellanus in Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 26, p. 90.

Chapter 15: The Leipsic Disputation

Two Theologies—Dividing Line—Question of the Power of the Will—State of the Question—Distinction between Mental Freedom and Moral Ability—Augustine—Paul—Salvation of God—Salvation of Man—Discussion between Luther and Eck on the Primacy—The Rock—False Decretals—Bohemianism—Councils have Erred—Luther Rest on the Bible Alone—Gain from the Discussion—A Great Fiction Abandoned—Wider Views—A more Catholic Church than the Roman

Picture: Arrival of the Wittemberg Theologians at Leipsic

Picture: Philip Melanchthon

Picture: View in Aix-la-Chapelle

The man who climbs to the summit of a mountain chain beholds the waters that gush forth from the soil rolling down the declivity, some on this side of the ridge and some on that. Very near to each other may lie the birth-places of these young rivers; but how different their courses! how dissimilar the countries which they water, and how widely apart lie the oceans, into which they ultimately pour their floods! This difference of destiny is occasioned by what would seem no great matter. The line of the mountain summit runs between their sources, and hence; though their beginnings are here, at the traveler's feet, on the same mountain-top, their endings are parted, it may be, by hundreds of miles. [294]

We are arrived at a similar point in the history of the two great systems whose rise and course we are employed in tracing. We stand at the watershed of the two theologies. We can here clearly trace the dividing line as it runs along, parting the primeval sources of the Protestant and the Roman theologies. These sources lie close, very close to each other, and yet the one is on this side of the line which divides truth from error, the other is on that; and hence the different and opposite course on which we behold each setting out; and so

far from ever meeting, the longer they flow they are but the farther parted. The discussion at Leipsic proceeded along this line; it was, in fact, the first distinct tracing-out and settling of this line, as the essential and eternal boundary between the two theologies - between the Roman and Protestant Churches.

The form which the question took was one touching the human will. What is the moral condition of man's will? in other words, What is the moral condition of man himself? As the will is, so is the man, for the will or heart is but a term expressive of the final outcome of the man; it is the organ which concentrates all the findings of his animal, intellectual, and spiritual nature - body, mind, and soul - and sends them forth in the form of wish and act. Is man able to choose that which is spiritually good? In other words, when sin and holiness are put before him, and he must make his choice between the two, will the findings of his whole nature, as summed up and expressed in his choice, be on the side of holiness? Dr. Eck and the Roman theologians at Leipsic maintained the affirmative, asserting that man has the power, without aid from the Spirit of God, and simply of himself, to choose what is spiritually good, and to obey God. Luther, Carlstadt, and the new theologians maintained the negative, affirming that man lost this power when he fell; that he is now morally unable to choose holiness; and that, till his nature be renewed by the Holy Spirit, he cannot love or serve God. ¹

This question, it is necessary to remark, is not one touching the freedom of man. About this there is no dispute. It is admitted on both sides, the Popish and Protestant, that man is a free agent. Man can make a choice; there is neither physical nor intellectual constraint upon his will, and having made his choice he can act conformably to it. This constitutes man a moral and responsible agent. But the question is one touching the moral ability of the will. Granting our freedom of choice, have we the power to choose good? Will the perceptions, bias, and desires of our nature, as summed up and expressed by the will, be on the side of holiness as holiness? They will not, says the Protestant theology, till the nature is renewed by the Holy Spirit. The will may be physically free, it may be intellectually

¹Compare account of disputation as given by Seckendorf, lib. 1, see. 25 and 26, pp. 71 - 94, with that of Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 15 - 17.

free, and yet, by reason of the bias to sin and aversion to holiness which the Fall planted in the heart, the will is not morally free; it is dominated over by its hatred of holiness and love of sin, and will not act in the way of preferring holiness and loving God, till it be rid of the spiritual incapacity which hatred of what is good inflicts upon it.

But let us return to the combatants in the arena at Leipsic. Battle has already been joined, and we find the disputants stationed beside the deepest sources of the respective theologies, only half conscious of the importance of the ground they occupy, and the far-reaching consequences of the propositions for which they are respectively to fight.

“Man’s will before his conversion,” says Carlstadt, “can perform no good work. Every good work comes entirely and exclusively from God, who gives to man first the will to do, and then the power of accomplishing.”² Such was the proposition maintained at one end of the hall. It was a very old proposition, though it seemed new when announced in the Pleisenberg hall, having been thoroughly obscured by the schoolmen. The Reformers could plead Augustine’s authority in behalf of their proposition; they could plead a yet greater authority, even that of Paul. The apostle had maintained this proposition both negatively and positively. He had described the “carnal mind” as “enmity against God;” ([Romans 8:7, 8](#)) He had spoken of the understanding as “darkness,” and of men as “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them.” This same doctrine he had put also in the positive form. “It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” ([Philippians 2:13](#)) Our Savior has laid down a great principle which amounts to this, that corrupt human nature by itself can produce nothing but what is corrupt, when he said,

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“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” ([John 3:6](#)) And the same great principle is asserted, with equal clearness, though in figurative language, when he says, “A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.” And were commentary needed to bring out the full meaning of this statement, we have it in the personal application which the apostle makes of it to himself. “For I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwelleth no good thing.” ([Romans 7:18](#)) If then man’s whole

²Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 25, pp. 72 - 74; Add. 1.

nature be corrupt, said the Reformer, nothing but what is corrupt can proceed from him, till he be quickened by the Spirit of God. Antecedently to the operations of the Spirit upon his understanding and heart, he lacks the moral power of loving and obeying God, and of effecting anything that may really avail for his deliverance and salvation; and he who can do nothing for himself must owe all to God.

At the other end of the hall, occupying the pulpit over which was suspended the representation of St. George and the dragon, rose the tall portly form of Dr. Eck. With stentorian voice and animated gestures, he repudiates the doctrine which has just been put forth by Carlstadt. Eck admits that man is fallen, that his nature is corrupt, but he declines to define the extent of that corruption; he maintains that it is not universal, that his whole nature is not corrupt, that man has the power of doing some things that are spiritually good; and that, prior to the action of God's Spirit upon his mind and heart, man can do works which have a certain kind of merit, the merit of congruity even; and God rewards these good works done in the man's own strength, with grace by which he is able to do what still remains of the work of his salvation.³

The combatants at the one end of the hall fight for salvation by grace - grace to the entire exclusion of human merit: salvation of God. The combatants at the other end fight for salvation by works, a salvation beginning in man's own efforts and good works, and these efforts and good works running along the whole line of operation; and though they attract to them supernatural grace, and make it their yoke-fellow as it were, yet themselves substantially and meritoriously do the work. This is salvation of man.

If rite doctrine of the corruption of man's whole nature be true, if he has lost the power of choosing what is spiritually good, and doing work spiritually acceptable to God, the Protestant divines were right. If he retains this power, the Roman theologians were on the side of truth. There is no middle position.

Thus the controversy came to rage around this one point - Has the Will the power to choose and to do what is spiritually good? This, they said, was the whole controversy between Romanism

³Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 25, p. 74; Add. 1. Pallavicino, lib., 1, cap. 17, p. 76.

and Protestantism. All the lines of argument on both sides flowed out of, or ran up into, this one point. It was the greatest point of all in theology viewed on the side of man; and according as it was to be decided, Romanism is true and Protestantism is false, or Protestantism is true and Romanism is false.

“I acknowledge,” said Eck, who felt himself hampered in this controversy by opinions favorable to the doctrine of grace which, descending from the times of Augustine, and maintained though imperfectly and inconsistently by some of the schoolmen, had lingered in the Church of Rome till now - “I acknowledge that the first impulse in man’s conversion proceeds from God, and that the will of man in this instance is entirely passive.”

“Then,” asked Carlstadt, who thought that he had won rite argument, “after this first impulse which proceeds from God, what follows on the part of man? Is it not that which Paul denominates will, and which the Fathers entitle consent?”

“Yes,” answered the Chancellor of Ingolstadt, “but this consent of man comes partly from our natural will and partly from God’s grace” - thus recalling what he appeared to have granted; making man a partner with God in the origination of will or first act of choice in the matter of his salvation, and so dividing with God the merit of the work.

“No,” responded Carlstadt, “this consent or act of will comes entirely from God; he it is who creates it in the man.”⁴

Offended at a doctrine which so completely took away from man all cause of glorifying, Eck, feigning astonishment and anger, exclaimed, “Your doctrine converts a man into a stone or log, incapable of any action.”

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⁴Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 25, pp. 75, 82. Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 17. Eck distinguished between *totum* and *totaliter*, between whole and wholly. He admitted that, the good in man, viewed as a whole, was produced by God, but not wholly. This Pallavicino (lib. 1, cap. 15) explains by saying the whole apple (*tutto il pomo*) is produced by the sun, (*ma non tolamente*) but not wholly - the plant cooperates; in like manner, he said, the whole good in man comes from God, but man co-operates in its production. Carlstadt, on the other hand, maintained that God is the one, exclusive, and independent cause of that good - that is, of the conversion of man; that whatever is pleasing to God, and springs from saving faith, comes of the efficacious, independent, and proper working of God (*totaliter a Deo esse, independenter, effcaciter, et propria vi agente* - Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 25), and that man in that work contributes only the passive faculties on which God operates.

The apostle had expressed it better: “dead in trespasses and sins.” Yet he did not regard those in that condition whom he addressed as a stone or a log, for he gave them the motives to believe, and held them guilty before God should they reject the Gospel.

A log or a stone! it was answered from Carlstadt’s end of the hall. Does our doctrine make man such? does it reduce him to the level of an irrational animal? By no means. Can he not meditate and reflect, compare and choose? Can he not read and understand the statements of Scripture declaring to him in what state he is sunk, that he is “without strength,” and bidding him ask the aid of the Spirit of God? If he ask, will not that Spirit be given? will not the light of truth be made to shine into his understanding? and by the instrumentality of the truth, will not his heart be renewed by the Spirit, his moral bias against holiness taken away, and he become able to love and obey God? In man’s capacity to become the subject of such a change, in his possessing such a framework of powers and faculties as, when touched by the Spirit, can be set in motion in the direction of good, is there not, said the Reformers, sufficient to distinguish man from a log, a stone, or an irrational animal?

The Popish divines on this head have ignored a distinction on which Protestant theologians have always and justly laid great stress, the distinction between the rational and the spiritual powers of man.

Is it not matter of experience, the Romanists have argued, that men of themselves - that is, by the promptings and powers of their unrenewed nature - have done good actions? Does not ancient history show us many noble, generous, and virtuous achievements accomplished by the heathen? Did they not love and die for their country? All enlightened Protestant theologians have most cheerfully granted this. Man even unrenewed by the Spirit of God may be truthful, benevolent, loving, patriotic; and by the exercise of these qualities, he may invest his own character with singular gracefulness and glory, and to a very large degree benefit his species. But the question here is one regarding a higher good, even that which the Bible denominates holiness - “without which no man can see God” - actions done conformably to the highest standard, which is the Divine law, and from the motive of the highest end, which is the glory of God. Such actions, the Protestant theology teaches, can

come only from a heart purified by faith, and quickened by the Spirit of God.⁵

On the 4th of July, Luther stepped down into the arena. He had obtained permission to be present on condition of being simply a spectator; but, at the earnest solicitations of both sides, Duke George withdrew the restriction, and now he and Eck are about to join battle. At seven o'clock in the morning the two champions appeared in their respective pulpits, around which were grouped the friends and allies of each. Eck wore a courageous and triumphant air, claiming to have borne off the palm from Carlstadt, and it was generally allowed that he had proved himself the abler disputant. Luther appeared with a nosegay in his hand, and a face still bearing traces of the terrible storms through which he had passed. The former discussion had thinned the hall; it was too abstruse and metaphysical for the spectators to appreciate its importance. Now came mightier champions, and more palpable issues. A crowd filled the Pleisenberg hall, and looked on while the two giants contended.

It was understood that the question of the Pope's primacy was to be discussed between Luther and Eck. The Reformer's emancipation from this as from other parts of the Romish system had been gradual. When he began the war against the indulgence-mongers, he never doubted that so soon as the matter should come to the knowledge of the Pope and the other dignitaries, they would be as forward as himself to condemn the monstrous abuse. To his astonishment, he found them throwing their shield over it, and arguing from Scripture in a way that convinced him that the men whom he had imagined as sitting in a region of serene light, were in reality immersed in darkness. This led him to investigate the basis of the Roman primacy, and soon he came to the conclusion that it had no foundation whatever

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⁵Romish divines generally, and Bellarmine and Moehler in particular, have misrepresented the views of both Luther and Calvin, and their respective followers, on this head. They have represented Luther as teaching a doctrine which would deprive fallen man of all religious and moral capacity. Calvin, they say, was less extravagant than Luther, but to that extent less consistent with his fundamental position. There is no inconsistency whatever between Luther's and Calvin's views on this point. The only difference between the two lies in the point indicated in the text, even that Calvin gives more prominence than Luther does to the remains of the Divine image still to be found in fallen man, as attested by the virtues of the heathen. But as to man's tendency to spiritual good, and the power of realising to any degree by his own strength his salvation, both held the same doctrine.

in either the early Church or in the Word of God. He denied that the Pope was head of the Church by Divine right, though he was still willing to grant that he was head of the Church by human right - that is, by the consent of the nations.

Eck opened the discussion by affirming that the Pope's supremacy was of Divine appointment. His main proof, as it is that of Romanists to this hour, was the well-known passage, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church." Luther replied, as Protestants at this day reply, that it is an unnatural interpretation of the words to make Peter the rock; that their natural and obvious sense is, that the truth Peter had just confessed - in other words Christ himself - is the rock; that Augustine and Ambrose had so interpreted the passage, and that therewith agree the express declarations of Scripture - "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;" (1 [Corinthians 3:11](#)) and that Peter himself terms Christ "the chief corner-stone, and a living stone on which we are built up a spiritual house."⁶

It is unnecessary to go into the details of the disputation. The line of argument, so often traversed since that day, has become very familiar to Protestants. But we must not overlook the perspicacity and courage of the man who first opened the path, nor the wisdom which taught him to rely so confidently on the testimony of Scripture, nor the independence by which he was able to emancipate himself from the trammels of a servitude sanctioned by the submission of ages.

Luther in this disputation labored under the disadvantage of having to confront numerous quotations from the false decretals. That gigantic forgery, which forms so large a part of the basis of the Roman primacy, had not then been laid bare; nevertheless, Luther looking simply at the internal evidence, in the exercise of his intuitive sagacity, boldly pronounced the evidence produced against him from this source spurious. He even retreated to his stronghold, the early centuries of Christian history, and especially the Bible, in neither of which was proof or trace of the Pope's supremacy to be discovered.⁷

⁶1 [Peter 2:4, 5, 6](#). Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 16.

⁷We have seen bishops of name in our own day make the same confession. "I cannot find any traces of the Papacy in the times of the Apostles," said Bishop Strossmayer, when arguing against the Infallibility in the Council of the Vatican. "Am I able to find them

When the doctor of Ingolstadt found that despite his practiced logic, vast reading, and ready eloquence, he was winning no victory, and that all his arts were met and repelled by the simple massive strength, knowledge of Scripture, and familiarity with the Fathers which the monk of Wittemberg displayed, he was not above a discreditable ruse. He essayed to raise a prejudice against Luther by charging him with being “a patron of the heresies of Wicliffe and Huss.” The terrors of such an accusation, we in this age can but faintly realize. The doctrines of Huss and Jerome still lay under great odium in the West; and Eck hoped to overwhelm Luther by branding him with the stigma of Bohemianism. The excitement in the hall was immense when the charge was hurled against him; and Duke George and many of the audience half rose from their seats, eager to catch the reply.

Luther well knew the peril in which Eck had placed him, but he was faithful to his convictions. “The Bohemians,” he said, “are schismatics; and I strongly reprobate schism: the supreme Divine right is charity and unity. But among the articles of John Huss condemned by the Council of Constance, some are plainly most Christian and evangelical, which the universal Church cannot condemn.”⁸ Eck had unwittingly done both Luther and the Reformation a service. The blow which he meant should be a mortal one had severed the last link in the Reformer’s chain. Luther had formerly repudiated the primacy of the Pope, and appealed from the Pope to a Council. Now he publicly accuses a Council of having condemned what was “Christian” - in short, of having erred. It was clear that the infallible authority of Councils, as well as that of the Pope, must be given up. Henceforward Luther stands upon the authority of Scripture alone.

The gain to the Protestant movement from the Leipsic discussion was great. Duke George, frightened by the charge of Bohemianism, was henceforward its bitter enemy. There were others who were incurably prejudiced against it. But these losses were more than balanced by manifold and substantial gains. The views of Luther were henceforward clearer. The cause got a broader and firmer foothold. Of those who sat on the benches, many became its converts.

when I search the annals of the Church? Ah! well, I frankly confess that I have searched for a Pope in the first four centuries, and have not found him.”

⁸“Quos non possit universalis Ecclesia damnare.” (Loescher, *Acts and Docum. Reform.* - Vide Gerdesius, tom. 1, 255.)

[299] The students especially were attracted by Luther, and forsaking the University of Leipsic, flocked to that of Wittemberg. Some names, that afterwards were among the brightest in the ranks of the Reformers, were at this time enrolled on the evangelical side - Poliander, Cellarius, the young Prince of Anhalt, Cruciger, and last and greatest of all, Melancthon. Literature heretofore had occupied the intellect and filled the heart of this last distinguished man, but now, becoming as a little child, he bowed to the authority of the Word of God, and dedicating all his erudition to the Protestant cause, he began to expound the Gospel with that sweetness and clearness which were so peculiarly his own. Luther loved him before, but from this time he loved him more than ever. Luther and Melancthon were true yoke-fellows; they were not so much twain as one; they made up between them a perfect agent for the times and the work. How admirably has Luther hit this off! "I was born," said he, "to contend on the field of battle with factions and wicked spirits. It is my task to uproot the stock and the stem, to clear away the briars and the underwood. I am the rough workman who has to prepare the way and smooth the road. But Philip advances quietly and softly. He tills and plants the ground; sows and waters it joyfully, according to the gifts which God has given him with so liberal a hand."⁹

The war at Leipsic, then, was no affair of outposts merely. It raged round the very citadel of the Roman system. The first assault was directed against that which emphatically is the key of the Roman position, its deepest foundation as a theology - namely, man's independence of the grace of God. For it is on the doctrine of man's ability to begin and - with the help of a little supplemental grace, conveyed to him through the sole channel of the Sacraments - to accomplish his salvation, that Rome builds her scheme of works, with all its attendant penances, absolutions, and burdensome rites. The second blow was struck at that dogma which is the corner-stone of Rome as a hierarchy - the Pope's primacy.

The Reformers strove to overthrow both, that they might substitute - for the first, GOD, as the sole Author of man's salvation; and for the second, CHRIST as the sole Monarch of the Church.

⁹Luth. Opp. (W) 14. 200. D'Aubigne, vol. 2, p. 68.

Luther returned from Leipsic a freer, a nobler, and a more courageous man. The fetters of Papalism had been rent. He stood erect in the liberty wherewith the Gospel makes all who receive and follow it free. He no longer bowed to Councils; he no longer did reverence to the "chair" set up at Rome, and to which the ages had listened, believing the voice that proceeded from it to be the voice of God. Luther now acknowledged no infallible guide on earth save the Bible. From this day forward there was a greater power in every word and a greater freedom in every act of the Reformer.

Once more in the midst of his friends at Wittemberg, Luther's work was resumed. Professors and students soon felt the new impetus derived from the quickened and expanded views which the Reformer had brought back with him from his encounter with Eck.

He had discarded the mighty fiction of the primacy; lifting his eyes above the throne that stood on the Seven Hills, with its triple-crowned occupant, he fixed them on that King whom God hath set upon the holy hill of Zion. In the living and risen Redeemer, to whom all power in heaven and in earth has been given, he recognized the one and only Head of the Church. This brought with it an expansion of view as regarded the Church herself. The Church in Luther's view was no longer that community over which the Pope stretches his scepter. The Church was that holy and glorious company which has been gathered out of every land by the instrumentality of the Gospel. On all the members of that company one Spirit has descended, knitting them together into one body, and building them up into a holy temple. The narrow walls of Rome, which had aforetime bounded his vision, were now fallen; and the Reformer beheld nations from afar who had never heard of the name of the Pope, and who had never borne his yoke, gathering, as the ancient seer had foretold, to the Shiloh. This was the Church to which Luther had now come, and of which he rejoiced in being a member.

The drama is now about to widen, and new actors are about to step upon the stage. Those who form the front rank, the originating and creative spirits, the men whose words, more powerful than edicts and armies, are passing sentence of doom upon the old order of things, and bidding a new take its place, are already on the scene. We recognize them in that select band of enlightened and powerful intellects and purified souls at Wittemberg, of whom

[300] Luther was chief. But the movement must necessarily draw into
[301] itself the political and material forces of the world, either in the way
of co-operation or of antagonism. These secondary agents, often
mistaken for the first, were beginning to crowd upon the stage. They
had contemned the movement at its beginning - the material always
under-estimates the spiritual - but now they saw that it was destined
to change kingdoms-to change the world. Mediaevalism took the
alarm. Shall it permit its dominion quietly to pass from it? Reviving
in a power and glory unknown to it since the days of Charlemagne,
if even then, it threw down the gage of battle to Protestantism. Let
us attend to the new development we see taking place, at this crisis,
in this old power.

Nothing more unfortunate, as it seemed, could have happened for
the cause of the world's progress. All things were prognosticating
a new era. The revival of ancient learning had given an impetus to
the human mind. A spirit of free inquiry and a thirst for rational
knowledge had been awakened; society was casting off the yoke
of antiquated prejudices and terrors. The world was indulging the
cheering hope that it was about to make good its escape from the
Dark Ages. But, lo! the Dark Ages start up anew. They embody
themselves afresh in the mighty Empire of Charles. It is a general
law, traceable through all history that before their fall a rally takes
place in the powers of evil.

**Book 6: From the Leipsic Disputation to
the Diet at Worms, 1521**

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Chapter 1: Protestantism and Imperialism; or, the Monk and the Monarch

Dangers of Luther—Doubtful Aid—Death of Maximilian—Candidates for the Empire—Character of Charles of Spain—His Dominions—The Empire Offered to Frederick of Saxony—Declined—Charles of Spain Chosen—Wittenberg—Luther's Labours—His Appeal to the People of Germany—His Picture of Germany under the Papacy—Reforms Called for—Impression produced by his Appeal

Picture: Charles V., Emperor of Germany

Picture: The Conclave Electing the Emperor of Germany

Among the actors that now begin to crowd the stage there are two who tower conspicuously above the others, and fix the gaze of all eyes, well-nigh exclusively, upon themselves. With the one we are already familiar, for he has been some time before us, the other is only on the point of appearing. They come from the opposite poles of society to mingle in this great drama. The one actor first saw the light in a miner's cottage, the cradle of the other was placed in the palace of an ancient race of kings. The one wears a frock of serge, the other is clad in an imperial mantle. The careers of these two men are not more different in their beginning than they are fated to be in their ending. Emerging from a cell the one is to mount a throne, where he is to sit and govern men, not by the force of the sword, but by the power of the Word. The other, thrown into collision with a power he can neither see nor comprehend, is doomed to descend through one humiliation after another, till at last from a throne, the greatest then in the world, he comes to end his days in a cloister. But all this is yet behind a veil.

Meanwhile the bulkier, but in reality weaker power, seems vastly to overtop the stronger. The Reformation is utterly dwarfed in presence of a colossal Imperialism. If Protestantism has come forth from the Ruler of the world, and if it has been sent on the benign

errand of opening the eyes and loosing the fetters of long-enslaved nations, one would have thought that its way would be prepared, and its task made easy, by some signal weakening of its antagonist. On the contrary, it is at this moment that Imperialism develops into sevenfold strength. It is clear the great Ruler seeks no easy victory. He permits dangers to multiply, difficulties to thicken, and the hand of the adversary to be made strong. But by how much the fight is terrible, and the victory all but hopeless, by so much are the proofs resplendent that the power which, without earthly weapon, can scatter the forces of Imperialism, and raise up a world which a combined spiritual and secular despotism has trodden into the dust, is Divine. It is the clash and struggle of these two powers that we are now to contemplate. But first let us glance at the situation of Luther.

Luther's friends were falling away, or growing timid. Even Staupitz was hesitating, now that the goal to which the movement tended was more distinctly visible. In the coldness or the absence of these friends, other allies hastened to proffer him their somewhat doubtful aid. Drawn to his side rather by hatred of Papal tyranny than by appreciation of Gospel liberty and purity, their alliance somewhat embarrassed the Reformer. It was the Teutonic quite as much as the Reformed element—a noble product when the two are blended—that now stirred the German barons, and made their hands grasp their sword-hilts when told that Luther's life was in danger; that men with pistols under their cloak were dogging him; that Serra Longa was writing to the Elector Frederick, "Let not Luther find an asylum in the States of your highness; let him be rejected of all and stoned in the face of heaven;" that Miltitz, the Papal legate, who had not forgiven his discomfiture, was plotting to snare him by inviting him to another interview at Treves; and that Eck had gone to Rome to find a balm for his wounded pride, by getting forged in the Vatican the bolt that was to crush the man whom his scholastic subtlety had not been able to vanquish at Leipsic.

There seemed cause for the apprehensions that now began to haunt his friends. "If God do not help us," exclaimed Melanchthon, as he listened to the ominous sounds of tempest, and lifted his eye to a sky every hour growing blacker, "If God do not help us, we shall all perish." Even Luther himself was made at times to know, by the momentary depression and alarm into which he was permitted to

sink, that if he was calm, and strong, and courageous, it was God that made him so. One of the most powerful knights of Franconia, Sylvester of Schaumburg, sent his son all the way to Wittenberg with a letter to Luther, saying, "If the electors, princes, magistrates fail you, come to me. God willing, I shall soon have collected more than a hundred gentlemen, and with their help I shall be able to protect you from every danger."¹

Francis of Sickingen, one of those knights who united the love of letters to that of arms, whom Melancthon styled "a peerless ornament of German knighthood," offered Luther the asylum of his castle. "My services, my goods, and my body, all that I possess are at your disposal," wrote he. Ulrich of Hutten, who was renowned for his verses not less than for his deeds of valor, also offered himself as a champion of the Reformer. His mode of warfare, however, differed from Luther's. Ulrich was for falling on Rome with the sword, Luther sought to subdue her by the weapon of the Truth. "It is with swords and with bows," wrote Ulrich, "with javelins and bombs that we must crush the fury of the devil." "I will not have recourse to arms and bloodshed in defense of the Gospel," said Luther, shrinking back from the proposal. "It was by the Word that the Church was founded, and by the Word also it shall be re-established." And, lastly, the prince of scholars in that age, Erasmus, stood forward in defense of the monk of Wittenberg. He did not hesitate to affirm that the outcry which had been raised against Luther, and the disturbance which his doctrines had created, were owing solely to those whose interests, being bound up with the darkness, dreaded the new day that was rising on the world² - a truth palpable and trite to us, but not so to the men of the early part of the sixteenth century.

When the danger was at its height, the Emperor Maximilian died (January 12th, 1519).³ This prince was conspicuous only for his good nature and easy policy, but under him the Empire had enjoyed a long and profound peace. An obsequious subject of Rome, the Reformed movement was every day becoming more the object of his dislike, and had he lived he would have insisted on the elector's banishing Luther, which would have thrown him into the hands of

¹Seckendorf, lib. 1., sec. 27, p. 111.

²Sleidan, bk. 1., p. 21.

³Ibid., p. 13.

his mortal enemies. By the death of Maximilian at this crisis, the storm that seemed ready to burst passed over for the time. Till a new emperor should be elected, Frederick of Saxony, according to an established rule, became regent. This sudden shifting of the scenes placed the Reformer and the Reformation under the protection of the man who for the time presided over the Empire.

Negotiations and intrigues were now set on foot for the election of a new emperor. These became a rampart around the Reformed movement. The Pope, who wished to carry a particular candidate, found it necessary, in order to gain his object, to conciliate the Elector Frederick, whose position as regent, and whose character for wisdom, gave him a potential voice in the electoral college. This led to a clearing of the sky in the quarter of Rome.

There were two candidates in the field—Charles I. of Spain, and Francis I. of France. Henry VIII. of England, finding the prize which he eagerly coveted beyond his reach, had retired from the contest. The claims of the two rivals were very equally balanced. Francis was gallant, chivalrous, and energetic, but he did not sustain his enterprises by a perseverance equal to the ardour with which he had commenced them. Of intellectual tastes, and a lover of the new learning, wise men and scholars, warriors and statesmen, mingled in his court, and discoursed together at his table. He was only twenty-six, yet he had already reaped glory on the field of war. “This prince,” says Muller, “was the most accomplished knight of that era in which a Bayard was the ornament of chivalry, and one of the most enlightened and amiable men of the polished age of the Medici.”⁴ Neither Francis nor his courtiers were forgetful that Charlemagne had worn the diadem, and its restoration to the Kings of France would dispel the idea that was becoming common, that the imperial crown, though nominally elective, was really hereditary, and had now been permanently vested in the house of Austria.

Charles was seven years younger than his rival, and his disposition and talents gave high promise. Although only nineteen he had been trained in affairs, for which he had discovered both inclination and aptitude. The Spanish and German blood mingled in his veins, and his genius combined the qualities of both races. He possessed

⁴MullerUniv. Hist., bk. 19, sec. 1.

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the perseverance of the Germans, the subtlety of the Italians, and the taciturnity of the Spaniards. His birth-place was Ghent. Whatever prestige riches, extent of dominion, and military strength could give the Empire, Charles would bring to it. His hereditary kingdom, inherited through Ferdinand and Isabella, was Spain. Than Spain there was no more flourishing or powerful monarchy at that day in Christendom. To this magnificent domain, the seat of so many opulent towns, around which was spread an assemblage of corn-bearing plains, wooded sierras, and vegas, on which the fruits of Asia mingled in rich luxuriance with those of Europe, were added the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, Flanders and the rich domains of Burgundy; and now the death of his grand-father, the Emperor Maximilian, had put him in possession of the States of Austria. Nor was this all; the discovery of Columbus had placed a new continent under his sway; and how large its limit, or how ample the wealth that might flow from it, Charles could not, at that hour, so much as conjecture. So wide were the realms over which this young prince reigned. Scarcely had the sun set on their western frontier when the morning had dawned on their eastern.

It would complete his glory, and render him without a peer on earth, should he add the imperial diadem to the many crowns he already possessed. He scattered gold profusely among the electors and princes of Germany to gain the coveted prize.⁵ His rival Francis was liberal, but he lacked the gold-mines of Mexico and Peru which Charles had at his command. The candidates, in fact, were too powerful. Their greatness had well-nigh defeated both of them; for the Germans began to fear that to elect either of the two would be to give themselves a master. The weight of so many sceptres as those which Charles held in his hand might stifle the liberties of Germany.

The electors, on consideration, were of the mind that it would be wiser to elect one of themselves to wear the imperial crown. Their choice was given, in the first instance, neither to Francis nor to Charles; it fell unanimously on Frederick of Saxony.⁶ Even the Pope was with them in this matter. Leo

⁵Robertson, *Hist. Charles V.*, bk. 1., p. 83.

⁶Sleidan, bk. 1., p. 18.

X. feared the overgrown power of Charles of Spain. If the master of so many kingdoms should be elected to the vacant dignity, the Empire might overshadow the mitre. Nor was the Pope more favorably inclined towards the King of France: he dreaded his ambition; for who could tell that the conqueror of Carignano would not carry his arms farther into Italy? On these grounds, Leo sent his earnest advice to the electors to choose Frederick of Saxony. The result was that Frederick was chosen. We behold the imperial crown offered to Luther's friend!

Will he or ought he to put on the mantle of Empire? The princes and people of Germany would have hailed with joy his assumption of the dignity. It did seem as if Providence were putting this strong scepter into his hand, that therewith he might protect the Reformer. Frederick had, oftener than once, been painfully sensible of his lack of power. He may now be the first man in Germany, president of all its councils, generalissimo of all its armies; and may stave off from the Reformation's path, wars, scaffolds, violences of all sorts, and permit it to develop its spiritual energies, and regenerate society in peace. Ought he to have become emperor? Most historians have lauded his declination as magnanimous. We take the liberty most respectfully to differ from them. We think that Frederick, looking at the whole case, ought to have accepted the imperial crown; that the offer of it came to him at a moment and in a way that made the point of duty clear, and that his refusal was an act of weakness.

Frederick, in trying to shun the snare of ambition, fell into that of timidity. He looked at the difficulties and dangers of the mighty task, at the distractions springing up within the Empire, and the hostile armies of the Moslem on its frontier. Better, he thought, that the imperial scepter should be placed in a stronger hand; better that Charles of Austria should grasp it. He forgot that, in the words of Luther, Christendom was threatened by a worse foe than the Turk; and so Frederick passed on the imperial diadem to one who was to become a bitter foe of the Reformation.

But, though we cannot justify Frederick in shirking the toils and perils of the task to which he was now called, we recognize in his decision the overriding of a Higher than human wisdom. If Protestantism had grown up and flourished under the protection of the Empire, would not men have said that its triumph was owing to

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the fact that it had one so wise as Frederick to counsel it, and one so powerful to fight for it? Was it a blessing to primitive Christianity to be taken by Constantine under the protection of the arms of the first Empire? True, oceans of blood would have been spared, had Frederick girded on the imperial sword and become the firm friend and protector of the movement. But the Reformation without martyrs, without scaffolds, without blood! We should hardly have known it. It would be the Reformation without glory and without power. Not its annals only, but the annals of the race would have been immensely poorer had they lacked the sublime spectacles of faith and heroism which were exhibited by the martyrs of the sixteenth century. Not an age in the future which the glory of these sufferers will not illuminate!

Frederick of Saxony had declined what the two most powerful sovereigns in Europe were so eager to obtain. On the 28th of June, 1519, the electoral conclave, in their scarlet robes, met in the Church of St. Bartholomew, in Frankfort-on-the-Main, and proceeded to the election of the new emperor. The votes were unanimous in favor of Charles of Spain.⁷ It was more than a year (October, 1520) till Charles arrived in Germany to be crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle; and meanwhile the regency was continued in the hands of Frederick, and the shield was still extended over the little company of workers at Wittemberg, who were busily engaged in laying the foundations of an empire that would long outlast that of the man on whose head the diadem of the Caesars was about to be placed.

The year that elapsed between the election and the coronation of Charles was one of busy and prosperous labor at Wittemberg. A great light shone in the midst of the little band there gathered together, namely, the Word of God. The voice from the Seven Hills fell upon their ear unheeded; all doctrines and practices were tried by the Bible alone. Every day Luther took a step forward. New proofs of the falsehood and corruption of the Roman system continually crowded in upon him. It was now that the treatise of Laurentius Valla fell in his way, which satisfied him that the donation of Constantine to the Pope was a fiction. This strengthened the conclusion at which he had

⁷After the election the ambassadors of Charles offered a large sum of money to the Elector Frederick; he not only refused it, but commanded all about him to take not a farthing. (Sleidan, bk. 1., p. 18.)

already arrived touching the Roman primacy, even that foundation it had none save the ambition of Popes and the credulity of the people. It was now that he read the writings of John Huss, and, to his surprise, he found in them the doctrine of Paul—that which it had cost himself such agonies to learn—respecting the free justification of sinners. “We have all,” he exclaimed, half in wonder, half in joy, “Paul, Augustine, and myself, been Hussites without knowing it! ⁸ and he added, with deep seriousness, “God will surely visit it upon the world that the truth was preached to it a century ago, and burned?” It was now that he proclaimed the great truth that the Sacrament will profit no man without faith, and that it is folly to believe that it will operate spiritual effects of itself and altogether independently of the disposition of the recipient. The Romanists stormed at him because he taught that the Sacrament ought to be administered in both kinds, not able to perceive the deeper principle of Luther, which razed the opus operatum with all attendant thereon. They were defending the outworks: the Reformer, with a giant’s strength, was levelling the citadel. It was amazing what activity and rigour of mind Luther at this period displayed. Month after month, rather week by week, he launched treatise on treatise. These productions of his pen, “like sparks from under the hammer, each brighter than that which preceded it,” added fresh force to the conflagration that was blazing on all sides. His enemies attacked him: they but drew upon themselves heavier blows. It was, too, during this year of marvellously varied labor, that he published his Commentary upon the Galatians, “his own epistle” as he termed it. In that treatise he gave a clearer and fuller exposition than he had yet done of what with him was the great cardinal truth, even justification through faith alone. But he showed that such a justification neither makes void the law, inasmuch as it proceeds on the ground of a righteousness that fulfils the law, nor leads to licentiousness, inasmuch as the faith that takes hold of righteousness for justification, operates in the heart to its renewal, and a renewed heart is the fountain of every holy virtue and of every good work.

It was now, too, that Luther published his famous appeal to the emperor, the princes, and the people of Germany, on the Reformation

⁸L. EPP., 2., p. 452.

of Christianity⁹ This was the most graphic, courageous, eloquent, and spirit stirring production which had yet issued from his pen. It may be truly said of it that its words were battles. The sensation it produced was immense. It was the trumpet that summoned the German nation to the great conflict. "The time for silence," said Luther, "is past, and the time to speak is come." And verily he did speak.

[306] In this manifesto Luther first of all draws a most masterly picture of the Roman tyranny. Rome had achieved a three-fold conquest. She had triumphed over all ranks and classes of men; she had triumphed over all the rights and interests of human society; she had enslaved kings; she had enslaved Councils; she had enslaved the people. She had effected a serfdom complete and universal. By her dogma of Pontifical supremacy she had enslaved kings, princes, and magistrates. She had exalted the spiritual above the temporal in order that all rulers, and all tribunals and causes, might be subject to her own sole absolute and irresponsible will, and that, unchallenged and unpunished by the civil power, she might pursue her career of usurpation and oppression.

Has she not, Luther asked, placed the throne of her Pope above the throne of kings, so that no one dare call him to account? The Pontiff enlists armies, makes war on kings, and spills their subjects' blood; nay, he challenges for the persons of his priests immunity from civil control, thus fatally deranging the order of the world, and reducing authority into prostration and contempt.

[307] By her dogma of spiritual supremacy Rome had vanquished Councils. The Bishop of Rome claimed to be chief and ruler over all bishops. In him was centered the whole authority of the Church, so that let him promulgate the most manifestly erroneous dogma, or commit the most flagrant wickedness, no Council had the power
[308] to reprove or depose him. Councils were nothing, the Pope was all. The Spiritual supremacy made him the Church: the Temporal, the World.

By her assumed sole and infallible right of interpreting Holy Scripture, Rome had enslaved the people. She had put out their eyes; she had bound them in chains of darkness, that she might make them

⁹Sleidan, bk. 1., p. 31.

bow down to any god she was pleased to set up, and compel them to follow whither she was pleased to lead-into temporal bondage, into eternal perdition.

Behold the victory which Rome has achieved! She stands with her foot upon kings, upon bishops, upon peoples! All has she trodden into the dust.

These, to use Luther's metaphor, were the three walls behind which Rome had entrenched herself. ¹⁰ Is she threatened with the temporal power? She is above it. Is it proposed to cite her before a Council? She only has the right to convoke one. Is she attacked from the Bible? She only has the power of interpreting it. Rome has made herself supreme over the throne, over the Church, over the Word of God itself! Such was the gulf in which Germany and Christendom were sunk. The Reformer called on all ranks in his nation to combine for their emancipation from a vassalage so disgraceful and so ruinous.

To rouse his countrymen, and all in Christendom in whose breasts there yet remained any love of truth or any wish for liberty, he brought the picture yet closer to the Germans, not trusting to any general portraiture, however striking. Entering into details, he pointed out the ghastly havoc the Papal oppression had inflicted upon their common country.

Rome, he said, had ruined Italy; for the decay of that fine land, completed in our day, was already far advanced in Luther's. And now, the vampire Papacy having sucked the blood of its own country, a locust swarm from the Vatican had alighted on Germany. The Fatherland, the Reformer told the Germans, was being gnawed to the very bones. Annats, palliums, commendams, administrations, indulgences, reversions, incorporations, reserves-such were a few, and but a few, of the contrivances by which the priests managed to convey the wealth of Germany to Rome. Was it a wonder that princes, cathedrals, and people were poor? The wonder was, with such a cormorant swarm preying upon them, that anything was left. All went into the Roman sack which had no bottom. Here was robbery surpassing that of thieves and highwaymen, who expiated their offences on the gibbet. Here were the tyranny and destruction

¹⁰Seckendorf, lib. 1., sec. 28, p. 112.

of the gates of hell, seeing it was the destruction of soul and body, the ruin of both Church and State. Talk of the devastation of the Turk, and of raising armies to resist him! there is no Turk in all the world like the Roman Turk.

The instant remedies which he urged were the same with those which his great predecessor, Wicliffe, a full hundred and fifty years before, had recommended to the English people, and happily had prevailed upon the Parliament to so far adopt. The Gospel alone, which he was laboring to restore, could go to the root of these evils, but they were of a kind to be corrected in part by the temporal power. Every prince and State, he said, should forbid their subjects giving annats to Rome. Kings and nobles ought to resist the Pontiff as the greatest foe of their own prerogatives, and the worst enemy of the independence and prosperity of their kingdoms. Instead of enforcing the bulls of the Pope, they ought to throw his ban, seal, and briefs into the Rhine or the Elbe. Archbishops and bishops should be forbidden, by imperial decree, to receive their dignities from Rome. All causes should be tried within the kingdom, and all persons made amenable to the country's tribunals. Festivals should cease, as but affording occasions for idleness and all kinds of vicious indulgences, and the Sabbath should be the only day on which men ought to abstain from working. No more cloisters ought to be built for mendicant friars, whose begging expeditions had never turned to good, and never would; the law of clerical celibacy should be repealed, and liberty given to priests to marry like other men; and, in fine, the Pope, leaving kings and princes to govern their own realms, should confine himself to prayer and the preaching of the Word. "Hearest thou, O Pope, not all holy, but all sinful? Who gave thee power to lift thyself above God and break His laws? The wicked Satan lies through thy throat.-O my Lord Christ, hasten Thy last day, and destroy the devil's nest at Rome. There sits' the man of sin,' of whom Paul speaks, 'the son of perdition.'"

Luther well understood what a great orator ¹¹ since has termed "the expulsive power of a new emotion." Truth he ever employed as the only effectual instrumentality for expelling error. Accordingly, underneath Rome's system of human merit and salvation by works,

¹¹Dr. Chalmers.

he placed the doctrine of man's inability and God's free grace. This it was that shook into ruin the Papal fabric of human merit. By the same method of attack did Luther demolish the Roman kingdom of bondage. He penetrated the fiction on which it was reared. Rome takes a man, shaves his head, anoints him with oil, gives him the Sacrament of orders, and so infuses into him a mysterious virtue. The whole class of men so dealt with form a sacerdotal order, distinct from and higher than laymen, and are the divinely appointed rulers of the world.

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This falsehood, with the grievous and ancient tyranny of which it was the corner-stone, Luther overthrew by proclaiming the antagonistic truth. All really Christian men, said he, are priests. Had not the Apostle Peter, addressing all believers, said, "Ye are a royal priesthood"? It is not the shearing of the head, or the wearing of a peculiar garment, that makes a man a priest. It is faith that makes men priests, faith that unites them to Christ, and that gives them the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whereby they become filled with all holy grace and heavenly power. This inward anointing-this oil, better than any that ever came from the horn of bishop or Pope-gives them not the name only, but the nature, the purity, the power of priests; and this anointing have all they received who are believers on Christ.

Thus did Luther not only dislodge the falsehood, he filled its place with a glorious truth, lest, if left vacant, the error should creep back. The fictitious priesthood of Rome-a priesthood which lay in oils and vestments, and into which men were introduced by scissors and the arts of necromancy-departed, and the true priesthood came in its room. Men opened their eyes upon their glorious enfranchisement. They were no longer the vassals of a sacerdotal oligarchy, the bondsmen of shavelings; they saw themselves to be the members of an illustrious brotherhood, whose Divine Head was in heaven.

Never was there a grander oration. Patriots and orators have, on many great and memorable occasions, addressed their fellow-men, if haply they might rouse them to overthrow the tyrants who held them in bondage. They have plied them with every argument, and appealed to every motive. They have dwelt by turns on the bitterness of servitude and the sweetness of liberty. But never did patriot or orator address his fellow-men on a greater occasion than this-rarely, if

ever, on one so great. Never did orator or patriot combat so powerful an antagonist, or denounce so foul a slavery, or smite hypocrisy and falsehood with blows so terrible. And if orator never displayed more eloquence, orator never showed greater courage. This appeal was made in the face of a thousand perils. On these Luther did not bestow a single thought. He saw only his countrymen, and all the nations of Christendom, sunk in a most humiliating and ruinous thralldom, and with fearless intrepidity and Herculean force he hurled bolt on bolt, quick, rapid, and fiery, against that tyranny which was devouring the earth. The man, the cause, the moment, the audience, all were sublime.

And never was appeal more successful. Like a peal of thunder it rang from side to side of Germany. It sounded the knell of Roman domination in that land. The movement was no longer confined to Wittemberg; it was henceforward truly national. It was no longer conducted exclusively by theologians. Princes, nobles, burghers joined in it. It was seen to be no battle of creed merely; it was a struggle for liberty, religious and civil; for rights, spiritual and temporal; for the generation then living, for all the generations that were to live in the future; a struggle, in fine, for the manhood of the human race.

Luther's thoughts turned naturally to the new emperor. What part will this young potentate play in the movement? Presuming that it would be the just and magnanimous one that became so great a prince, Luther carried his appeal to the foot of the throne of Charles V. "The cause," he said, "was worthy to come before the throne of heaven, much more before an earthly potentate." Luther knew that his cause would triumph, whichever side Charles might espouse. But though neither Charles nor all the great ones of earth could stop it, or rob it of its triumph, they might delay it; they might cause the Reformation's path to be amid scaffolds and bloody fields, over armies vanquished and thrones cast down. Luther would much rather that its progress should be peaceful and its arrival at the goal speedy. Therefore he came before the throne of Charles as a suppliant; trembling, not for his cause, but for those who he foresaw would but destroy themselves by opposing it. What audience did the monk receive? Tho emperor never deigned the doctor of Wittemberg a reply.

Chapter 2: Pope Leo's Bull

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Eck at Rome—His Activity against Luther—Procures his
Condemnation—The Bull—Authorship of the Bull—Its Terms—Its
Two Bearers—The Bull crosses the Alps—Luther's "Babylonish
Captivity"—The Sacrament—His Extraordinary Letter to Pope
Leo—Bull arrives in Wittemberg—Luther enters a Notarial Protest
against it—He Burns it—Astonishment and Rage of
Rome—Luther's Address to the Students

Picture: View of Treves

Picture: View of Coburg, where Luther resided during the Diet of
Augsburg

We have almost lost sight of Dr. Eck. We saw him, after his disputation with Luther at Leipsic, set off for Rome. What was the object of his journey? He crossed the Alps to solicit the Pope's help against the man whom he boasted having vanquished. He was preceded by Cardinal Cajetan, another "conqueror" after the fashion of Eck, and who too was so little satisfied with the victory which he so loudly vaunted that, like Eck, he had gone to Rome to seek help and find revenge.

In the metropolis of the Papacy these men encountered greater difficulties than they had reckoned on. The Roman Curia was apathetic. Its members had not yet realised the danger in its full extent. They scouted the idea that Wittemberg would conquer Rome, and that an insignificant monk could shake the Pontiff's throne. History exhibited no example of any such astounding phenomenon. Great tempests had arisen in former ages. Rebel kings, proud heresiarchs, and barbarous or heretical nations had dashed themselves against the Papal chair, but their violence had no more availed to overturn it than ocean's foam to overthrow the rock.

The affair, however, was not without its risks, to which all were not blind. It was easy for the Church to launch her ban, but the civil power must execute it. What if it should refuse? Besides there

were, even in Rome itself, a few moderate men who, having a near view of the disorders of the Papal court, were not in their secret heart ill-pleased to hear Luther speak as he did. In the midst of so many adulators, might not one honest censor be tolerated? There were also men of diplomacy who said, Surely, amid the innumerable dignities and honors in the gift of the Church, something may be found to satisfy this clamorous monk. Send him a pall: give him a red hat. The members of the Curia were divided. The jurists were for citing Luther again before pronouncing sentence upon him: the theologians would brook no longer delay,¹ and pleaded for instant anathema.

The indefatigable Eck left no stone unturned to procure the condemnation of his opponent. He labored to gain over every one he came in contact with. His eloquence raised to a white heat the zeal of the monks. He spent hours of deliberation in the Vatican. He melted even the coldness of Leo. He dwelt on the character of Luther—so obstinate and so incorrigible that all attempts at conciliation were but a waste of time. He dwelt on the urgency of the matter; while they sat in debate in the Vatican, the movement was growing by days, by moments, in Germany. To second Eck's arguments, Cajetan, so ill as to be unable to walk, was borne every day in a litter into the council-chamber.² The doctor of Ingolstadt found another, and, it is said, even a more potent ally. This was no other than the banker Fugger of Augsburg. He was treasurer of the indulgences, and would have made a good thing of it if Luther had not spoilt his speculation. This awoke in him a most vehement desire to crush a heresy so hurtful to the Church's interest—and his own.

Meanwhile rumors reached Luther of what was preparing for him in the halls of the Vatican. These rumors caused him no alarm; his heart was fixed; he saw a Greater than Leo. A very different scene from Rome did Wittemberg at that moment present. In the former city all was anxiety and turmoil, in the latter all was peaceful and fruitful labor. Visitors from all countries were daily arriving to see and converse with the Reformer. The halls of the university were crowded with youth—the hope of the Reformation. The fame of

¹Polano, 1., p. 9.

²Pallavicino, lib. 1., cap. 20.

Melanchthon was extending; he had just given his hand to Catherine Krapp, and so formed the first link between the Reformation and domestic life, infusing thereby a new sweetness into both. It was at this hour, too, that a young Swiss priest was not ashamed to own his adherence to that Gospel which Luther preached. He waited upon the interim Papal nuncio in Helvetia, entreating him to use his influence at head-quarters to prevent the excommunication of the doctor of Wittemberg. The name of this priest was Ulrich Zwingli. This was the first break of day visible on the Swiss mountains.

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Meanwhile Eck had triumphed at Rome. On the 15th of June, 1520, the Sacred College brought their lengthened deliberations to a close by agreeing to fulminate the bull of excommunication against Luther. The elegancies or barbarisms of its style are to be shared amongst its joint concoctors, Cardinals Pucci, Ancona, and Cajetan.

“Now,” thought the Vulcans of the Vatican, when they had forged this bolt, “now we have finished the business. There is an end of Luther and the Wittemberg heresy.” To know how haughty at this moment was Rome’s spirit, we must turn to the bull itself.

“Arise, O’ Lord!”-so ran this famous document-“arise and be Judge in Thy own cause. Remember the insults daily offered to Thee by infatuated men. Arise, O Peter! remember thy holy Roman Church, the mother of all Churches, and mistress of the faith. Arise, O Paul! for here is a new Porphyry, who is attacking thy doctrines, and the holy Popes our predecessors’! Arise, in fine, assembly of all the saints, holy Church of God, and intercede with the Almighty!”⁴

The bull then goes on to condemn as scandalous, heretical, and damnable, forty-one propositions extracted from the writings of Luther. The obnoxious propositions are simple statements of Gospel truth. One of the doctrines singled out for special anathema was that which took from Rome the right of persecution, by declaring that “to burn heretics is contrary to the will of the Holy Ghost.”⁵ After the maledictory clauses of the bull, the document went on to extol the marvellous forbearance of the Holy See, as shown in its

³Pallavicino, lib. 1., cap. 20.

⁴Sleidan, bk. 2., p. 35.

⁵Art. 33 of the bull condemns this proposition: - “Haereticos comburi est contra voluntatem Spiritus.” (Bullarium Romanum, tom. 1., p. 610; Luxemburg, 1742.)

many efforts to reclaim its erring son. To heresy Luther had added contumacy. He had had the hardihood to appeal to the General Council in the face of the decretals of Pius II. and Julius II.; and he had filled up the measure of his sins by slandering the immaculate Papacy. The Papacy, nevertheless, yearned over its lost son, and “imitating the omnipotent God, who desireth not the death of a sinner,” earnestly exhorted the prodigal to return to the bosom of his mother, to bring back with him all he had led astray, and make proof of the sincerity of his penitence by reading his recantation, and committing all his books to the flames, within the space of sixty days. Failing to obey this summons, Luther and his adherents were pronounced incorrigible and accursed heretics, whom all princes and magistrates were enjoined to apprehend and send to Rome, or banish from the country in which they happened to be found. The towns where they continued to reside were laid under interdict, and every one who opposed the publication and execution of the bull was excommunicated in “the name of the Almighty God, and of the holy apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul.”⁶

These were haughty words; and at what a moment were they spoken! The finger of a man’s hand was even then about to appear, and to write on the wall that Rome had fulfilled her glory, had reached her zenith, and would henceforward hasten to her setting. But she knew not this. She saw only the track of light she had left behind her in her onward path athwart the ages. A thick veil hid the future with all its humiliations and defeats from her eyes.

The Pope advanced with excommunications in one hand and flatteries in the other. Immediately on the back of this terrible fulmination came a letter to the Elector Frederick from Leo X. The Pope in this communication dilated on the errors of that “son of iniquity,” Martin Luther; he was sure that Frederick cherished an abhorrence of these errors, and he proceeded to pass a glowing eulogium on the piety and orthodoxy of the elector, who he knew would not permit the blackness of heresy to sully the brightness of his own and his ancestors’ fame⁷ There was a day when these compliments would have been grateful to Frederick, but he had since

⁶Sarpi, livr. 1., p. 28; Basle, 1738. Sleidan, bk 1 p.35

⁷Sleidan, bk. 1., p. 32.

drunk at the well of Wittemberg, and lost his relish for the Roman cistern. The object of the letter was transparent, and the effect it produced was just the opposite of that which the Pope intended. From that day Frederick of Saxony resolved with himself that he would protect the Reformer.

Every step that Rome took in the matter was marked by infatuation. She had launched her bull, and must needs see to its being published in all the countries of Christendom. In order to this the bull was put into the hands of two nuncios, than whom it would hardly have been possible to find two men better fitted to render an odious mission yet more odious. These were Eck and Aleander.

Eck, the conqueror at Leipsic, who had left amid the laughter of the Germans, now re-crosses the Alps. He bears in his hand the bull that is to complete the ruin of his antagonist. "It is Eck's bull," said the Germans, "not the Pope's." It is the treacherous dagger of a mortal enemy, not the axe of a Roman lector⁸ Onward, however, came the nuncio, proud of the bull, which he had so large a share in fabricating—the very Atlas, in his own eyes, who bore up the sinking Roman world. As he passed through the German towns, he posted up the important document, amid the coldness of the bishops, the contempt of the burghers, and the hootings of the youth of the universities. His progress was more like that of a fugitive than a conqueror. He had to hide at times from the popular fury in the nearest convent, and he closed his career by going into permanent seclusion at Coburg.

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The other functionary was Aleander. To him was committed the task of bearing a copy of the bull to the Archbishop of Mainz, and of publishing it in the Rhenish towns. Aleander had been secretary to Pope Alexander VI., the infamous Borgia; and no worthier bearer could have been found of such a missive, and no happier choice could have been made of a colleague to Eck. "A worthy pair of ambassadors," said some; "both are admirably suited for this work, and perfectly matched in effrontery, impudence, and debauchery."⁹

The bull is slowly travelling towards Luther, and a glance at two publications which at this time (6th of October, 1520) issued from

⁸Pallavicino, lib. 1. cap. 20, p. 81.

⁹D'Aubigne, vol. 2., p. 135.

his pen, enables us to judge how far he is likely to meet it with a retractation. The Pope had exhorted him to burn all his writing: here are two additional ones which will have to be added to the heap before he applies the torch. The first is *The Babylonish Captivity of the Church*. "I denied," said Luther, owning his obligations to his adversaries, "that the Papacy was of Divine origin, but I granted that it was of human right. Now, after reading all the subtleties on which these gentry have set up their idol, I know that the Papacy is none other than the kingdom of Babylon, and the violence of Nimrod the mighty hunter.¹⁰ I therefore beseech all my friends and all the booksellers to burn the books that I have written on this subject, and to substitute this one proposition in their place: The Papacy is a general chase led by the Roman bishop to catch and destroy souls." These are not the words of a man who is about to present himself in the garb of a penitent at the threshold of the Roman See.

Luther next passed in review the Sacramental theory of the Church of Rome. The priest and the Sacrament - these are the twin pillars of the Papal edifice, the two saviours of the world. Luther, in his *Babylonish Captivity*, laid his hands upon both pillars, and bore them to the ground. Grace and salvation, he affirmed, are neither in the power of the priest nor in the efficacy of the Sacrament, but in the faith of the recipient. Faith lays hold on that which the Sacrament represents, signifies, and seals-even the promise of God; and the soul resting on that promise has grace and salvation. The Sacrament, on the side of God, represents the offered blessing; on the side of man, it is a help to faith which lays hold of that blessing. "Without faith in God's promise," said Luther, "the Sacrament is dead; it is a casket without a jewel, a scabbard without a sword." Thus did he explode the *opus operatum*, that great mystic charm which Rome had substituted for faith, and the blessed Spirit who works in the soul by means of it. At the very moment when Rome was advancing to crush him with the bolt she had just forged, did Luther pluck from her hand that weapon of imaginary omnipotence which had enabled her to vanquish men.

[314] Nay, more: turning to Leo himself, Luther did not hesitate to address him at this crisis in words of honest warning, and of singular

¹⁰Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 28, p. 112. Sleidan, bk. 2, p. 36.

courage. We refer, of course, to his well-known letter to the Pope. Some of the passages of that letter read like a piece of sarcasm, or a bitter satire; and yet it was written in no vein of this sort. The spirit it breathes is that of intense moral earnestness, which permitted the writer to think but of one thing, even the saving of those about to sink in a great destruction. Not thus did Luther write when he wished to pierce an opponent with the shafts of his wit, or to overwhelm him with the bolts of his indignation. The words he addressed to Leo were not those of insolence or of hatred, though some have taken them for such, but of affection too deep to remain silent, and too honest and fearless to flatter. Luther could distinguish between Leo and the ministers of his government.

We need give only a few extracts from this extraordinary letter: - "To the most Holy Father in God, Leo X., Pope at Rome, be all health in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

"From amid the fearful war which I have been waging for three years with disorderly men, I cannot help looking to you, O Leo, most Holy Father in God. And though the folly of your impious flatterers has compelled me to appeal from your judgment to a future Council, my heart is not turned away from your holiness; and I have not ceased to pray God earnestly, and with profound sighs, to grant prosperity to yourself and your Pontificate.

"It is true I have attacked some anti-Christian doctrines, and have inflicted a deep wound on my adversaries because of their impiety. Of this I repent not, as I have here Christ for an example. Of what use is salt if it have lost its savor, or the edge of a sword if it will not cut? Cursed be he who doeth the work of the Lord negligently. Most excellent Leo, far from having conceived any bad thoughts with regard to you, my wish is that you may enjoy the most precious blessings throughout eternity. One thing only I have done; I have maintained the word of truth. I am ready to yield to all in everything; but as to this word I will not, I cannot abandon it. He who thinks differently on this subject is in error.

"It is true that I have attacked the court of Rome; but neither yourself nor any man living can deny that there is greater corruption in it than was in Sodom and Gomorrah, and that the impiety that prevails makes cure hopeless. Yes, I have been horrified in seeing how, under your name, the poor followers of Christ were deceived...

“You know it. Rome has for many years been inundating the world with whatever could destroy both soul and body. The Church of Rome, formerly the first in holiness, has become a den of robbers, a place of prostitution, a kingdom of death and hell; so that Antichrist himself, were he to appear, would be unable to increase the amount of wickedness. All this is as clear as day.

“And yet, O Leo, you yourself are like a lamb in the midst of wolves—a Daniel in the lions’ den. But, single-handed, what can you oppose to these monsters? There may be three or four cardinals who to knowledge add virtue. But what are these against so many? You should perish by poison even before you could try

492 any remedy. It is all over with the court of Rome. The wrath of God has overtaken and will consume it. It hates counsel—it fears reform—it will not moderate the fury of its ungodliness; and hence it may be justly said of it as of its mother: We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed—forsake her.

“Rome is not worthy of you, and those who resemble you.” This, however, was no great compliment to Leo, for the Reformer immediately adds, “the only chief whom she deserves to have is Satan himself, and hence it is that in this Babylon he is more king than you are. Would to God that, laying aside this glory which your enemies so much extol, you would exchange it for a modest pastoral office, or live on your paternal inheritance. Rome’s glory is of a kind fit only for Iscariots. “Is it not true that under the vast expanse of heaven there is nothing more corrupt, more hateful than the Roman court? In vice and corruption it infinitely exceeds the Turks. Once the gate of heaven, it has become the mouth of hell—a wide mouth which the wrath of God keeps open, so that on seeing so many unhappy beings thrown headlong into it, I was obliged to lift my voice as in a tempest, in order that, at least, some might be saved from the terrible abyss.”

Luther next enters into some detail touching his communications with De Vio, Eck, and Miltitz, the agents who had come from the Roman court to make him cease his opposition to the Papal corruptions. And then he closes—“I cannot retract my doctrine. I cannot permit rules of interpretation to be imposed upon the Holy Scriptures. The Word of God—the source whence all freedom springs—must be left free. Perhaps I am too bold in giving advice to so high

a majesty, whose duty it is to instruct all men, but I see the dangers which surround you at Rome; I see you driven hither and thither; tossed, as it were, upon the billows of a raging sea. Charity urges me, and I cannot resist sending forth a warning cry.”

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That he might not appear before the Pope empty-handed, he accompanied his letter with a little book on the “Liberty of the Christian.” The two poles of that liberty he describes as faith and love; faith which makes the Christian free, and love which makes him the servant of all. Having presented this little treatise to one who “needed only spiritual gifts,” he adds, “I commend myself to your Holiness. May the Lord keep you for ever and ever! Amen.”

So spoke Luther to Leo-the monk of Wittemberg to the Pontiff of Christendom. Never were spoken words of greater truth, and never were words of truth spoken in circumstances in which they were more needed, or at greater peril to the speaker. If we laud historians who have painted in truthful colors, at a safe distance, the character of tyrants, and branded their vices with honest indignation, we know not on what principle we can refuse to Luther our admiration and praise. Providence so ordered it that before the final rejection of a Church which had once been renowned throughout the earth for its faith, Truth, once more and for the last time, should lift up her voice at Rome.

The bull of excommunication arrived at Wittemberg in October, 1520. It had ere this been published far and wide, and almost the last man to see it was the man against whom it was fulminated. But here at last it is. Luther and Leo: Wittemberg and Rome now stand face to face-Rome has excommunicated Wittemberg, and Wittemberg will excommunicate Rome. Neither can retreat, and the war must be to the death.

The bull could not be published in Wittemberg, for the university possessed in this matter powers superior to those of the Bishop of Brandenburg. It did, indeed, receive publication at Wittemberg, and that of a very emphatic kind, as we shall afterwards see, but not such publication as Eck wished and anticipated. The arrival of the terrible missive caused no fear in the heart of Luther. On the contrary, it inspired him with fresh courage. The movement was expanding into greater breadth. He saw clearly the hand of God guiding it to its goal.

Meanwhile the Reformer took those formal measures that were necessary to indicate his position in the eyes of the world, in the eyes of the Church which had condemned him, and in the eyes of posterity. He renewed his appeal with all solemnity from Leo X. to a future Council. ¹¹ On Saturday, the 17th of November, at ten o'clock in the morning, in the Augustine convent where he resided, in the presence of a notary public and five witnesses, among whom was Caspar Cruciger, he entered a solemn protest against the bull. The notary took down his words as he uttered them. His appeal was grounded on the four following points:-First, because he stood condemned without having been heard, and without any reason or proof assigned of his being in error. Second, because he was required to deny that Christian faith was essential to the efficacious reception of the Sacrament. Third, because the Pope exalts his own opinions above the Word of God; and Fourth, because, as a proud contemner of the Holy Church of God, and of a legitimate Council, the Pope had refused to convoke a Council of the Church, declaring that a Council is nothing of itself.

This was not Luther's affair only, but that of all Christendom, and accordingly he accompanied his protest against the bull by a solemn appeal to the "emperor, the electors, princes, barons, nobles, senators, and the entire Christian magistracy of Germany," calling upon them, for the sake of Catholic truth, the Church of Christ, and the liberty and right of a lawful Council, to stand by him and his appeal, to resist the impious tyranny of the Pope, and not to execute the bull till he had been legally summoned and heard before impartial judges, and convicted from Scripture. Should they act dutifully in this matter, "Christ, our Lord," he said, "would reward them with His everlasting grace. But if there be any who scorn my prayer, and continue to obey that impious man, the Pope, rather than God," he disclaimed all responsibility for the consequences, and left them to the supreme judgment of Almighty God.

In the track of the two nuncios blazed numerous piles-not of men, as yet, but of books, the writings of Luther. In Louvain, in Cologne, and many other towns in the hereditary estates of the emperor, a bonfire had been made of his works. To these many piles of Eck and

¹¹Lath. Opp., 2: 315; Jenae.

Aleander, Luther replied by kindling one pile. He had written his bill of divorcement, now he will give a sign that he has separated irrevocably from Rome.

A placard on the walls of the University of Wittemberg announced that it was Luther's intention to burn the Pope's bull, and that this would take place at nine o'clock in the morning of December 10th, at the eastern gate of the town. On the day and hour appointed, Luther was seen to issue from the gate of the university, followed by a train of doctors and students to the number of 600, and a crowd of citizens who enthusiastically sympathised. The procession held on its way through the streets of Wittemberg, till, making its exit at the gate, it bore out of the city—for all unclean things were burned without the camp—the bull of the Pontiff. Arriving at the spot where this new and strange immolation was to take place, the members of procession found a scaffold already erected, and a pile of logs laid in order upon it. One of the more distinguished Masters of Arts took the torch and applied it to the pile. Soon the flames blazed up. At this moment, the Reformer, wearing the frock of his order, stepped out from the crowd and approached the fire, holding in his hand the several volumes which constitute the Canon Law, the Compend of Gratian, the Clementines, the Extravagants of Julius II., and other and later coinages of the Papal mint. He placed these awful volumes one after the other on the blazing pile. [316]

It fared with them as if they had been common things. Their mysterious virtue did not profit in the fire. The flames, fastening on them with their fierce tongues, speedily turned these monuments of the toil, the genius, and the infallibility of the Popes to ashes. This hecatomb of Papal edicts was not yet complete. The bull of Leo X. still remained. Luther held it up in his hand. "Since thou hast vexed the Holy One of the Lord," said he, "may everlasting fire vex and consume thee."¹² With these words he flung it into the burning mass. Eck had pictured to himself the terrible bull, as he bore it in triumph across the Alps, exploding in ruin above the head of the monk. A more peaceful exit awaited it. For a few moments it blazed and crackled in the flames, and then it calmly mingled its

¹²Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 31, p. 121.

dust with the ashes of its predecessors, that winter morning, on the smouldering pile outside the walls of Wittenberg.¹³

The blow had been struck. The procession reformed. Doctors, masters, students, and townsmen, again gathering round the Reformer, walked back, amid demonstrations of triumph, to the city.

Had Luther begun his movement with this act, he would but have wrecked it. Men would have seen only fury and rage, where now they saw courage and faith. The Reformer began by posting up his "Theses"-by letting in the light upon the dark places of Rome. Now, however, the minds of men were to a large extent prepared. The burning of the bull was, therefore, the right act at the right time. It was felt to be the act, not of a solitary monk, but of the German people-the explosion of a nation's indignation. The tidings of it traveled fast and far; and when the report reached Rome, the powers of the Vatican trembled upon their seats. It sounded like the Voice that is said to have echoed through the heathen world at our Savior's birth, and which awoke lamentations and wailings amid the shrines and groves of paganism: "Great Pan is dead!"

Luther knew that one blow would not win the battle; that the war was only commenced, and must be followed up by ceaseless, and if possible still mightier blows. Accordingly next day, as he was lecturing on the Psalms, he reverted to the episode of the bull, and broke out into a strain of impassioned eloquence and invective. The burning of the Papal statutes, said he, addressing the crowd of students that thronged the lecture-room, is but the sign, the thing signified was what they were to aim at, even the conflagration of the Papacy. His brow gathered and his voice grew more solemn as he continued: "Unless with all your hearts you abandon the Papacy, you cannot save your souls. The reign of the Pope is so opposed to the law of Christ and the life of the Christian, that it will be safer to roam the desert and never see the face of man, than abide under the rule of Antichrist. I warn every man to look to his soul's welfare, lest by submitting to the Pope he deny Christ. The time is come when Christians must choose between death here and death hereafter. For my own part, I choose death here. I cannot lay such a burden upon my soul as to hold my peace in this matter: I must look to the great

¹³Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 22.

reckoning. I abominate the Babylonian pest. As long as I live I will proclaim the truth. If the wholesale destruction of souls throughout Christendom cannot be prevented, at least I shall labor to the utmost of my power to rescue my own countrymen from the bottomless pit of perdition.”¹⁴

The burning of the Pope's bull marks the closing of one stage and the opening of another in the great movement. It defines the fullness of Luther's doctrinal views; and it was this matured and perfected judgment respecting the two systems and the two Churches, that enabled him to act with such decision—a decision which astounded Rome, and which brought numerous friends around himself. Rome never doubted that her bolt would crush the monk. She had stood in doubt as to whether she ought to launch it, but she never doubted that, once launched, it would accomplish the suppression of the Wittemberg revolt. For centuries no opponent had been able to stand before her. In no instance had her anathemas failed to execute the vengeance they were meant to inflict. Kings and nations, principalities and powers, when struck by excommunication, straightway collapsed and perished as if a vial of fire had been emptied upon them. And who was this Wittemberg heretic, that he should defy a power before which the whole world crouched in terror? Rome had only to speak, to stretch out her arm, to let fall her bolt, and this adversary would be swept from her path; nor name nor memorial would remain to him on earth. Rome would make Wittemberg and its movement a reproach, a hissing, and a desolation. She did speak, she did stretch out her arm, she did launch her bolt. And what was the result? To Rome a terrible and appalling one. The monk, rising up in his strength, grasped the bolt hurled against him from the Seven Hills, and flung it back at her from whom it came.

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¹⁴Luth. Opp. (Lat.) 2, 123. D'Aubigne, 2 152.

Chapter 3: Interviews and Negotiations

A Springtime—The New Creation—Three Circles—The Inner Reformed Doctrine—The Middle Morality and Liberty—The Outer—The Arts and Sciences—Charles V. Crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle—Papal Envoy Aleander Labours to have the Bull executed against Luther—His Efforts with Frederick and Charles—Prospect of a War with France—The Emperor courts the Pope—Luther to be the Bribe—The Pope Won—The Court goes to Worms—A Tournament Interrupted—The Emperor’s Draft—Edict for Luther’s Execution

Picture: Desiderius Erasmus

Picture: Luther Burning the Popes Bull

Picture: View of Cologne

Picture: The Cathedral of Worms

From the posting of the “Theses” on the doors of the Schloss Kirk of Wittemberg, on October 31st, 1517, to the burning of the Pope’s bull on December 10th, 1520, at the eastern gate of the same town, are just three years and six weeks. In these three short years a great change has taken place in the opinions of men, and indeed in those of Luther himself. A blessed spring-time seems to have visited the world. How sweet the light! How gracious the drops that begin to fall out of heaven upon the weary earth! What a gladness fills the souls of men, and what a deep joy breaks out on every side, making itself audible in the rising songs of the nations, which, gathering around the standard of a recovered Gospel, now “come,” in fulfilment of an ancient oracle, “unto Zion with singing! “

The movement we are contemplating has many circles or spheres. We trace it into the social life of man; there we see it bringing with it purity and virtue. We trace it into the world of intellect and letters; there it is the parent of rigour and grace—a literature whose bloom is fairer, and whose fruit is sweeter than the ancient one, immediately springs up. We trace it into the politics of nations; there it is the

nurse of order, and the guardian of liberty. Under its aegis there grow up mighty thrones, and powerful and prosperous nations. Neither is the monarch a tyrant, nor are the subjects slaves; because the law is superior to both, and forbids power to grow into oppression, or liberty to degenerate into licentiousness. Over the whole of life does the movement diffuse itself. It has no limits but those of society-of the world.

But while its circumference was thus vast, we must never forget that its center was religion or dogma—great everlasting truths, acting on the soul of man, and effecting its renewal, and so restoring both the individual and society to right relations with God, and bringing both into harmony with the holy, beneficent, and omnipotent government of the Eternal. This was the pivot on which the whole movement rested, the point around which it revolved.

At that center were lodged the vital forces—the truths. These ancient, simple, indestructible, changeless powers came originally from Heaven; they constitute the life of humanity, and while they remain at its heart it cannot die, nor can it lose its capacity of reinvigoration and progress. These life-containing and life-giving principles had, for a thousand years past, been as it were in a sepulcher, imprisoned in the depths of the earth. But now, in this gracious spring-time, their bands were loosed, and they had come forth to diffuse themselves over the whole field of human life, and to manifest their presence and action in a thousand varied and beautiful forms.

Without this center, which is theology, we never should have had the outer circles of this movement, which are science, literature, art, commerce, law, liberty. The progress of a being morally constituted, as society is, must necessarily rest on a moral basis. The spiritual forces, which Luther was honoured to be the instrument of once more setting in motion, alone could originate this movement, and conduct it to such a goal as would benefit the world. The love of letters, and the love of liberty, were all too weak for this. They do not go deep enough, nor do they present a sufficiently high aim, nor supply motives strong enough to sustain the toil, the self-denial, the sacrifice by which alone the end aimed at in any true reformation can be attained. Of this the history of Protestantism furnishes us with two notable examples. Duke George of Saxony was a prince of truly national spirit, and favored the movement at the first, because

he saw that it embodied a resistance to foreign tyranny. But his hatred to the doctrine of grace made him, in no long time, one of its bitterest enemies. He complained that Luther was spoiling all by his “detestable doctrines,” not knowing that it was the doctrines that won hearts, and that it was the hearts that furnished swords to fight the battle of civil liberty.

[319] The career of Erasmus was a nearly equally melancholy one. He
[320] had many feelings and sympathies in common with Luther. The Reformation owes him much for his edition of the Greek New Testament.¹ Yet neither his refined taste, nor his exquisite scholarship, nor his love of liberty, nor his abhorrence of monkish ignorance could retain him on the side of Protestantism; and the man who had dealt Rome some heavy blows, when in his prime, sought refuge when old within the pale of Romanism, leaving letters and liberty to care for themselves.

We turn for a little while from Luther to Charles V., from Wittenberg to Aix-la-Chapelle. The crown of Charlemagne was about to be placed on the head of the young emperor, in the presence of the electoral princes, the dukes, archbishops, barons, and counts of the Empire, and the delegates of the Papal See. Charles had come from Spain to receive the regalia of empire, taking England in his way, where he spent four days in attempts to secure the friendship of Henry VIII., and detach his powerful and ambitious minister, Cardinal Wolsey, from the interests of the French king, by dangling before his eyes the brilliant prize of the Papal tiara. Charles was crowned on the 23rd of October, in presence of a more numerous and splendid assembly than had ever before gathered to witness the coronation of emperor.

Having fallen prostrate on the cathedral floor and said his prayers, Charles was led to the altar and sworn to keep the Catholic faith and defend the Church. He was next placed on a throne overlaid with gold. While mass was being sung he was anointed on the head, the breast, the armpits, and the palms of his hands. Then he was led to the vestry, and clothed as a deacon. Prayers having been said, a naked sword was put into his hand, and again he promised to defend

¹Published, privately in 1515; publicly in 1516. He thus, as Gerdesius says, exhibited the foundation and rule of all reformation. (*Hist. Renovati Doctrinoeque Reformata*, tom. 1, p. 147.)

the Church and the Empire. Sheathing the sword, he was attired in the imperial mantle, and received a ring, with the scepter and the globe. Finally, three archbishops placed the crown upon his head; and the coronation was concluded with a proclamation by the Archbishop of Mainz, to the effect that the Pope confirmed what had been done, and that it was his will that Charles V. should reign as emperor. ²

Along with the assemblage at Aix-la-Chapelle came a visitor whose presence was neither expected nor desired—the plague; and the moment the coronation was over, Charles V. and his brilliant suite took their departure for Cologne. The emperor was now on his way to Worms, where he purposed holding his first Diet. The rules of the Golden Bull had specially reserved that honour for Nuremberg; but the plague was at present raging in that town also, and Worms was chosen in preference. In the journey thither the court halted at Cologne, and in this ancient city on the banks of the Rhine were commenced those machinations which culminated at the Diet of Worms.

The Papal See had delegated two special envoys to the imperial court to look after the affair of Luther, Marino Caraccioli, and Girolamo Aleander. ³ This matter now held the first place in the thoughts of the Pope and his counsellors. They even forgot the Turk for the time. All their efforts to silence the monk or to arrest the movement had hitherto been in vain, or rather had just the opposite effect. The alarm in the Vatican was great. The champions sent by Rome to engage Luther had one after another been discomfited. Tetzl, the great indulgence-monger, Luther had put utterly to rout. Cajetan, the most learned of their theologians, he had completely baffled. Eck, the ablest of their polemics, he had vanquished; the plausible Miltitz had spread his snares in vain, he had been outwitted and befooled; last of all, Leo himself had descended into the arena; but he had fared no better than the others; he had been even more ignominiously handled, for the audacious monk had burned his bull in the face of all Christendom. Where was all this to end? Already the See of Rome had sustained immense damage. Pardons were

²Sleidan, bk. 2, p. 37.

³Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 23.

becoming unsaleable. Annats and reservations and first-fruits were, alas! withheld; holy shrines were forsaken; the authority of the keys and the ancient regalia of Peter was treated with contempt; the canon law, that mighty monument of Pontifical wisdom and justice, which so many minds had toiled to rear, was treated as a piece of lumber, and irreverently thrown upon the burning pile; worst of all, the Pontifical thunder had lost its terrors, and the bolt which had shaken monarchs on their thrones was daringly flung back at the thunderer himself. It was time to curb such audacity and punish such wickedness.

[321] The two envoys at the court of the emperor left no stone unturned to bring the matter to an issue. Of the two functionaries the more zealous was Aleander, who has already come before us. An evil prestige attached to him for his connection with the Papal See during the most infamous of its Pontificates, that of Alexander VI.; but he possessed great abilities, he had scholarly tastes, indefatigable industry, and profound devotion to the See of Rome. She had at that hour few men in her service better able to conduct to a favorable issue this difficult and dangerous negotiation. Luther sums up graphically his qualities. "Hebrew was his mother-tongue, Greek he had studied from his boyhood, Latin he had long taught professionally. He was a Jew,⁴ but whether he had ever been baptised he did not know. He was no Pharisee, however, for certainly he did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, seeing he lived as if all perished with the body. His greed was insatiable, his life abominable, his anger at times amounted to insanity. Why he seceded to the Christians he knew not, unless it were to glorify Moses by obscuring Christ."⁵

Aleander opened the campaign with a bonfire of Luther's writings at Cologne. "What matters it," said some persons to the Papal delegate, "to erase the writing on paper? it is the writing on men's hearts you ought to erase. Luther's opinions are written there." "True," replied Aleander, comprehending his age, "but we must teach by signs which all can read."⁶ Aleander, however, wished to bring something else to the burning pile—the author of the books even. But first he must get him into his power. The Elector of Saxony

⁴Pallavicino informs us that Aleander was born of a respectable family in Friuli.

⁵Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 34, p. 125.

⁶Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 23, pp. 91, 92.

stood between him and the man whom he wished to destroy. He must detach Frederick from Luther's side. He must also gain over the young emperor Charles. The last ought to be no difficult matter. Born in the old faith, descended from an ancestry whose glories were entwined with Catholicism, tutored by Adrian of Utrecht, surely this young and ambitious monarch will not permit a contemptible monk to stand between him and the great projects he is revolving! Deprived of the protection of Frederick and Charles, Luther will be in the nuncio's power, and then the stake will very soon stifle that voice which is rousing Germany and resounding through Europe! So reasoned Aleander; but he found the path beset with greater difficulties than he had calculated on meeting.

Neither zeal nor labor nor adroitness was lacking to the nuncio. He went first to the emperor. "We have burned Luther's books," he said ⁷ -the emperor had permitted these piles to be kindled-" but the whole air is thick with heresy. We require, in order to its purification, an imperial edict against their author." "I must first ascertain," replied the emperor, "what our father the Elector of Saxony thinks of this matter."

It was clear that before making progress with the emperor the elector must be managed. Aleander begged an audience of Frederick. The elector received him in the presence of his counsellors, and the Bishop of Trent. The haughty envoy of the Papal court assumed a tone bordering on insolence in the elector's presence. He pushed aside Caraccioli, his fellow-envoy, who was trying to win Frederick by flatteries, and plunged at once into the business. This Luther, said Aleander, is rending the Christian State; he is bringing the Empire to ruin; the man who unites himself with him separates himself from Christ. Frederick alone, he affirmed, stood between the monk and the chastisement he deserved, and he concluded by demanding that the elector should himself punish Luther, or deliver him up to the chastiser of heretics, Rome. ⁸

The elector met the bold assault of Aleander with the plea of justice. No one, he said, had yet refuted Luther; it would be a gross scandal to punish a man who had not been condemned; Luther must

⁷Ibid., p. 89. Seckendorf, lib. 1. sec. 34, p. 124.

⁸Seckendorf, lib. 1 sec. 34, p, 125

be summoned before a tribunal of pious, learned, and impartial judges.⁹

This pointed to the Diet about to meet at Worms, and to a public hearing of the cause of Protestantism before that august assembly. Than this proposal nothing could have been more alarming to Alexander. He knew the courage and eloquence of Luther. He dreaded the impression his appearance before the Diet would make upon the princes. He had no ambition to grapple with him in person, or to win any more victories of the sort that Eck so loudly boasted. He knew how popular his cause already was all over Germany, and how necessary it was to avoid everything that would give it additional prestige. In his journeys, wherever he was known as the opponent of Luther, it was with difficulty that he could find admittance at a respectable inn, while portraits of the redoubtable monk stared upon him from the walls of almost every bedroom in which he slept. He knew that the writing of Luther were in all dwellings from the baron's castle to the peasant's cottage. Besides, would it not be an open affront to his master the Pope, who had excommunicated Luther, to permit him to plead his cause before a lay assembly? Would it not appear as if the Pope's sentence might be reversed by military barons, and the chair of Peter made subordinate to the States-General of Germany?

[322] On all these grounds the Papal nuncio was resolved to oppose to the uttermost Luther's appearance before the Diet.

Alexander now turned from the Elector of Saxony to the emperor. "Our hope of conquering," he wrote to the Cardinal Julio de Medici, "is in the emperor only."¹⁰ In the truth or falsehood of Luther's opinions the emperor took little interest. The cause with him resolved itself into one of policy. He asked simply which would further most his political projects, to protect Luther or to burn him? Charles appeared the most powerful man in Christendom, and yet there were two men with whom he could not afford to quarrel, the Elector of Saxony and the Pontiff. To the first he owed the imperial crown, for it was Frederick's influence in the electoral conclave that placed it on the head of Charles of Austria. This obligation might have been forgotten, for absolute monarchs have short memories, but

⁹Ibid

¹⁰Pallavicino, lib. 1., cap. 24, p. 93.

Charles could not dispense with the advice and aid of Frederick in the government of the Empire at the head of which he had just been placed. For these reasons the emperor wished to stand well with the elector.

On the other hand, Charles could not afford to break with the Pope. He was on the brink of war with Francis I., the King of France. That chivalrous sovereign had commenced his reign by crossing the Alps and fighting the battle of Marignano (1515), which lasted three days—"the giant battle," as Marshal Trivulzi called it.¹¹ This victory gained Francis I. the fame of a warrior, and the more substantial acquisition of the Duchy of Milan. The Emperor Charles meditated despoiling the French king of this possession, and extending his own influence in Italy. The Italian Peninsula was the prize for which the sovereigns of that age contended, seeing its possession gave its owner the preponderance in Europe. This aforetime frequent contest between the Kings of Spain and France was now on the point of being resumed. But Charles would speed all the better if Leo of Rome were on his side.

It occurred to Charles that the monk of Wittemberg was a most opportune card to be played in the game about to begin. If the Pope should engage to aid him in his war with the King of France, Charles would give Luther into his hands, that he might do with him as might seem good to him. But should the Pope refuse his aid, and join himself to Francis, the emperor would protect the monk, and make him an opposing power against Leo. So stood the matter. Meanwhile, negotiations were being carried on with the view of ascertaining on which side Leo, who dreaded both of these potentates, would elect to make his stand, and what in consequence would be the fate of the Reformer, imperial protection or imperial condemnation.

In this fashion did these great ones deal with the cause of the world's regeneration. The man who was master of so many kingdoms, in both the Old and the New Worlds, was willing, if he could improve his chances of adding the Dukedom of Milan to his already overgrown possessions, to fling into the flames the Reformer, and with him the movement out of which was coming the new times.

¹¹Muller, Univ. Hist. vol. 2, pp. 406, 420.

The monk was in their hands; so they thought. How would it have astonished them to be told that they were in his hands, to be used by him as his cause might require; that their crowns, armies, and policies were shaped and moved, prospered or defeated, with sole reference to those great spiritual forces which Luther wielded! Wittenberg was small among the many proud capitals of the world, yet here, and not at Madrid or at Paris, was, at this hour, the center of human affairs.

The imperial court moved forward to Worms. The two Papal representatives, Caraccioli and Aleander, followed in the emperor's train. Feats of chivalry, parties of pleasure, schemes of ambition and conquest, occupied the thoughts of others; the two nuncios were engrossed with but one object, the suppression of the religious movement; and to effect this all that was necessary, they persuaded themselves, was to bring Luther to the stake. Charles had summoned the Diet for the 6th of January, 1521. In his circular letters to the several princes, he set forth the causes for which it was convoked. One of these was the appointment of a council of regency for the government of the Empire during his necessary absences in his hereditary kingdom of Spain; but another, and still more prominent matter in the letters of convocation, was the concerting of proper measures for checking those new and dangerous opinions which so profoundly agitated Germany, and threatened to overthrow the religion of their ancestors. ¹²

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Many interests, passions, and motives combined to bring together at Worms, on this occasion, a more numerous and brilliant assemblage than perhaps had ever been gathered together at any Diet since the days of Charlemagne. It was the emperor's first Diet. His youth, and the vast dominions over which his scepter was swayed, threw a singular interest around him. The agitation in the minds of men, and the gravity of the affairs to be discussed, contributed further to draw unprecedented numbers to the Diet. Far and near, from the remotest parts, came the grandees of Germany. Every road leading to Worms displayed a succession of gay cavalcades. The electors, with their courts; the archbishops, with their chapters; margraves and barons, with their military retainers; the delegates

¹²Robertson, Hist. Charles V, bk.2

of the various cities, in the badges of their office; bands of seculars and regulars, in the habits of their order; the ambassadors of foreign States-all hastened to Worms, where a greater than Charles was to present himself before them, and a cause greater than that of the Empire was to unfold its claims in their hearing.

The Diet was opened on the 28th of January, 1521. It was presided over by Charles - a pale-faced, melancholy-looking prince of twenty, accomplished in feats of horsemanship, but of weak bodily constitution. Thucydides and Machiavelli were the authors he studied. Chievres directed his councils; but he does not appear to have formed as yet any decided plan of policy. "Charles had chiefly acquired from history," says Muller, "the art of dissimulating, which he confounded with the talent of governing."¹³ Amid the splendor that surrounded him, numberless affairs and perplexities perpetually distracted him; but the pivot on which all turned was the monk of Wittemberg and this religious movement. The Papal nuncios were night and day importuning him to execute the Papal bull against Luther. If he should comply with their solicitations and give the monk into their hands, he would alienate the Elector of Saxony, and kindle a conflagration in Germany which all his power might not be able to extinguish. If, on the other hand, he should refuse Aleander and protect Luther, he would thereby grievously offend the Pope, and send him over to the side of the French king, who was every day threatening to break out into war against him in the Low Countries, or in Lombardy, or in both.

There were tournaments and pastimes on the surface, anxieties and perplexities underneath; there were feastings in the banquet-hall, intrigues in the cabinet. The vacillations of the imperial mind can be traced in the conflicting orders which the emperor was continually sending to the Elector Frederick. One day he would write to him to bring Luther with him to Worms, the next he would command him to leave him behind at Wittemberg. Meanwhile Frederick arrived at the Diet without Luther.

The opposition which Aleander encountered only roused him to yet greater energy-indeed, almost to fury. He saw with horror the Protestant movement advancing from one day to another, while

¹³Muller, *Univ. Hist.*, vol. 3, p. 32

Rome was losing ground. Grasping his pen, he wrote a strong remonstrance to the Cardinal de Medici, the Pope's relative, to the effect that "Germany was separating itself from Rome;" and that, unless more money was sent to be scattered amongst the members of the Diet, he must abandon all hope of success in his negotiations.

¹⁴ Rome listened to the cry of her servant. She sent not only more ducats, but more anathemas. Her first bull against Luther had been conditional, inasmuch as it called on him to retract, and threatened him with excommunication if, within sixty days, he failed to do so. Now, however, the excommunication was actually inflicted by a new bull, fulminated at this time (6th January, 1521), and ordered to be published with terrible solemnities in all the churches of Germany. ¹⁵ This bull placed all Luther's adherents under the same curse as himself; and thus was completed the separation between Protestantism and Rome. The excision, pronounced and sealed by solemn anathema, was the act of Rome herself.

This new step simplified matters to both Aleander and Luther, but it only the more embroiled them to the emperor and his councillors. The politicians saw their path less clearly than before. It appeared to them the wiser course to stifle the movement, but the new ban seemed to compel them to fan it. This would be to lose the Elector even before they had gained the Pope; for the negotiations with the court of the Vatican had reached as yet no definite conclusion. They must act warily, and shun extremes.

[324] A new device was hit upon, which was sure to succeed, the diplomatists thought, in entrapping the theologians of Wittemberg. There was at the court of the emperor a Spanish Franciscan, John Glapio by name, who held the office of confessor to Charles. He was supple, plausible, and able. This man undertook to arrange the matter ¹⁶ which had baffled so many wise heads; and with this view he craved an interview with Gregory Bruck, or Pontanus, the councillor of the Elector of Saxony. Pontanus was a man of sterling

¹⁴Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 25, pp. 95, 96: "Il gran seguito di Martino; 1" alienazione del popolo d'Alemagna dalla Corte di Roma... e il rischio di perdere la Germania per avarizia d'una moneta."

¹⁵This bull is engrossed in Bullarum, Jan., 1521, under the title of Decret. Romanm Pontificem.

¹⁶Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 24, p. 93.

integrity, competently versed in theological questions, and sagacious enough to see through the most cunning diplomatist in all the court of the emperor. Glapio was a member of the reform party within the Roman pale, a circumstance which favored the guise he now assumed. At his interview with the councillor of Frederick, Glapio professed a very warm regard for Luther; he had read his writings with admiration, and he agreed with him in the main. “Jesus Christ,¹⁷ he said, heaving a deep sigh, “was his witness that he desired the reformation of the Church as ardently as Luther, or any one.” He had often protested his zeal on this head to the emperor, and Charles sympathised largely with his views, as the world would yet come to know.

From the general eulogium pronounced on the writings of Luther, Glapio excepted one work—the Babylonish Captivity. That work was not worthy of Luther, he maintained. He found in it neither his style nor his learning. Luther must disavow it. As for the rest of his works, he would propose that they should be submitted to a select body of intelligent and impartial men, that Luther should explain some things and apologise for others; and then the Pope, in the plenitude of his power and benignity, would reinstate him. Thus the breach would be healed, and the affair happily ended.¹⁸ Such was the little artifice with which the wise heads at the court of Charles hoped to accomplish so great things. They only showed how little able they were to gauge the man whom they wished to entrap, or to fathom the movement which they sought to arrest. Pontanus looked on while they were spreading the net, with a mild contempt; and Luther listened to the plot, when it was told him, with feelings of derision.

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The negotiations between the emperor and the court of the Vatican, which meanwhile had been going on, were now brought to a conclusion. The Pope agreed to be the ally of Charles in his approaching war with the French king, and the emperor, on his part, undertook to please the Pope in the matter of the monk of Wittemberg. The two are to unite, but the link between them is a stake. The Empire and the Popedom are to meet and shake hands over the ashes of Luther. During the two centuries which included and followed

¹⁷Weimar State Papers: apud D’Aubigne, vol. 2, p. 192.

¹⁸Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 37, p. 143.

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the Pontificate of Gregory VII., the imperial diadem and the tiara had waged a terrible war with each other for the supremacy of Christendom. In that age the two shared the world between them—other competitor there was none. But now a new power had risen up, and the hatred and terror which both felt to that new power made these old enemies friends. The die is cast. The spiritual and the temporal arms have united to crush Protestantism.

The emperor prepared to fulfill his part of the arrangement. It was hard to see what should hinder him. He had an overwhelming force of kingdoms and armies at his back. The spiritual sword, moreover, was now with him. If with such a combination of power he could not sweep this troublesome monk from his path, it would be a thing so strange and unaccountable that history might be searched in vain for a parallel to it.

It was now the beginning of February. The day was to be devoted to a splendid tournament. The lists were already marked out, the emperor's tent was pitched; over it floated the imperial banner; the princes and knights were girding on their armor, and the fair spectators of the show were preparing the honors and prizes to reward the feats of gallantry which were to signalise the mimic war, when suddenly an imperial messenger appeared commanding the attendance of the princes in the royal palace. It was a real tragedy in which they were invited to take part. When they had assembled, the emperor produced and read the Papal brief which had lately arrived from Rome, enjoining him to append the imperial sanction to the excommunication against Luther, and to give immediate execution to the bull. A yet greater surprise awaited them. The emperor next drew forth and read to the assembled princes the edict which he himself had drawn up in conformity with the Papal brief, commanding that it should be done as the Pope desired.

Chapter 4: Luther Summoned to the Diet at Worms

A Check—Aleander Pleads before the Diet—Protestantism more Frightful than Mahommedanism—Effect of Aleander’s Speech—Duke George—The Hundred and One Grievances—The Princes Demand that Luther be Heard—The Emperor resolves to Summon him to the Diet—A Safe-conduct—Maunday-Thursday at Rome—The Bull In Caena Domini—Luther’s Name Inserted in it—Luther comes to the Fulness of Knowledge—Arrival of the Imperial Messenger at Wittemberg—The Summons

Yet the storm did not burst. We have seen produced the Pope’s bull of condemnation; we have heard read the emperor’s edict empowering the temporal arm to execute the spiritual sentence; we have only a few days to wait, so it seems, and we shall see the Reformer dragged to the stake and burned. But to accomplish this one essential thing was yet lacking. The constitution of the Empire required that Charles, before proceeding further, should add that “if the States knew any better course, he was ready to hear them.” The majority of the German magnates cared little for Luther, but they cared a good deal for their prescriptive rights; they hated the odious tyranny and grinding extortions of Rome, and they felt that to deliver up Luther was to take the most effectual means to rivet the yoke that galled their own necks. The princes craved time for deliberation. Aleander was furious; he saw the prey about to be plucked from his very teeth. But the emperor submitted with a good grace. “Convince this assembly,” said the politic monarch to the impatient nuncio. It was agreed that Aleander should be heard before the Diet on the 13th of February.

It was a proud day for the nuncio. The assembly was a great one: the cause was even greater. Aleander was to plead for Rome, the mother and mistress of all churches: he was to vindicate the principedom of Peter before the assembled puissances of Christendom. He had the gift of eloquence, and he rose to the greatness of the

occasion. Providence ordered it that Rome should appear and plead by the ablest of her orators in the presence of the most august of tribunals, before she was condemned. The speech has been recorded by one of the most trustworthy and eloquent of the Roman historians, Pallavicino. ¹

[327] The nuncio was more effective in those parts of his speech in which he attacked Luther, than in those in which he defended the Papacy. His charges against the Reformer were sweeping and artful. He accused him of laboring to accomplish a universal ruin; of striking a blow at the foundations of religion by denying the doctrine of the Sacrament; of seeking to raze the foundations of the hierarchy by affirming that all Christians are priests; of seeking to overturn civil order by maintaining that a Christian is not bound to obey the magistrate; of aiming to subvert the foundations of morality by his doctrine of the moral inability of the will; and of unsettling the world beyond the grave by denying purgatory. The portion of seeming truth contained in these accusations made them the more dangerous. “A unanimous decree,” said the orator in closing his speech, “from this illustrious assembly will enlighten the simple, warn the imprudent, decide the waverers, and give strength to the weak... But if the axe is not laid at the root of this poisonous tree, if the death-blow is not struck, then... I see it overshadowing the heritage of Jesus Christ with its branches, changing our Lord’s vineyard into a gloomy forest, transforming the kingdom of God into a den of wild beasts, and reducing Germany into that state of frightful barbarism and desolation which has been brought upon Asia by the superstition of Mahomet. ² I should be willing,” said he, with consummate art, “to deliver my body to the flames, if the monster that has engendered this growing heresy could be consumed at the same stake, and mingle his ashes with mine.” ³

¹ See Aleander’s speech in Pallavicino, bk. 1, chap. 25, pp. 98-108.

² “Onde vvengadella Germania per la licenziosa Eresia di Lutero cio ch” e avvenuto dell’ Asia per la sensuale Superstizione di Macometto.” (Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 25.)

³ Pallavicino, lib. 1., cap. 25, p. 97. Seckendorf has said that Pallavicino invented this speech and put it into the mouth of Aleander. Some Protestant writers have followed Seckendorf. There is no evidence in support of this supposition. D’Aubigne believes in the substantial authenticity of the speech. Pallavicino tells us the sources from which he took the speech; more especially Aleander’s own letters, still in the library of the Vatican.

The nuncio had spoken for three hours. The fire of his style, and the enthusiasm of his delivery, had roused the passions of the Diet; and had a vote been taken at that moment, the voices of all the members, one only excepted, would have been given for the condemnation of Luther. ⁴ The Diet broke up, however, when the orator sat down, and thus the victory which seemed within the reach of Rome escaped her grasp.

When the princes next assembled, the fumes raised by the rhetoric of Aleander had evaporated, and the hard facts of Roman extortion alone remained deeply imprinted in the memories of the German barons. These no eloquence could efface. Duke George of Saxony was the first to present himself to the assembly. His words had the greater weight from his being known to be the enemy of Luther, and a hater of the evangelical doctrines, although a champion of the rights of his native land and a foe of ecclesiastical abuses, he ran his eye rapidly over the frightful traces which Roman usurpation and venality had left on Germany. Annats were converted into dues; ecclesiastical benefices were bought and sold; dispensations were procurable for money; stations were multiplied in order to fleece the poor; stalls for the sale of indulgences rose in every street; pardons were earned not by prayer or works of charity, but by paying the market-price of sin; penances were so contrived as to lead to a repetition of the offence; fines were made exorbitant to increase the revenue arising from them; abbeys and monasteries were emptied by commendams, and their wealth transported across the Alps to enrich foreign bishops; civil causes were drawn before ecclesiastical tribunals: all which "grievous perdition of miserable souls" demanded a universal reform, which a General Council only could accomplish. Duke George in conclusion demanded that such should be convoked.

To direct past themselves the storm of indignation which the archbishops and abbots ⁵ saw to be rising in the Diet, they laid the chief blame of the undeniable abuses, of which the duke had

⁴Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 26, p. 108: "la maggior partede raunati concorrevva nella sentenza d' estirpar l' Eresia Luterana."

⁵The progress which the reforming spirit had made, even among the German ecclesiastics, may be judged of from the indifference of many who were deeply interested in the maintenance of the old system. "Even those," complained Eck, "who hold from the Pope the best benefices and the richest canonries remained mute as fishes; many of them

presented so formidable a catalogue, at the door of the Vatican. So costly were the tastes and so luxurious the habits of the reigning Pope, they hinted, that he was induced to bestow Church livings not on pious and learned men, but on jesters, falconers, grooms, valets, and whosoever could minister to his personal pleasures or add to the gaiety of his court. The excuse was, in fact, an accusation.

[328] A committee was appointed by the Diet to draw up a list of the oppressions under which the nation groaned.⁶ This document, containing a hundred and one grievances, was presented to the emperor at a subsequent meeting of the Diet, together with a request that he would, in fulfilment of the terms of the capitulation which he had signed when he was crowned, take steps to effect a reformation of the specified abuses.

The Diet did not stop here. The princes demanded that Luther should be summoned before it. It were unjust, they said, to condemn him without knowing whether he were the author of the incriminated books, and

513 without hearing what he had to say in defense of his opinions.⁷ The emperor was compelled to give way, though he covered his retreat under show of doubting whether the books really were Luther's. He wished, he said, to have certainty on that point. Aleander was horror-struck at the emperor's irresolution. He saw the foundations of the Papacy shaken, the tiara trembling on his master's brow, and all the terrible evils he had predicted in his great oration, rushing like a devastating tempest upon Christendom. But he strove in vain against the emperor's resolve, and the yet stronger force behind it, in which that resolve had its birth—the feeling of the German people.⁸ It was concluded in the Diet that Luther should be summoned. Aleander had one hope left, the only mitigating circumstance about this alarming affair, even that Luther would be denied a safe-conduct. But this proposal he was ultimately unable to carry,⁹ and on

even extolled Luther as a man filled with the Spirit of God, and called the defenders of the Pope sophists and flatterers." (D'Aubigne.)

⁶The important catalogue has been preserved in the archives of Weimar. (Seckendorf, p. 328; apud D'Aubigne, vol. 2, p. 203.)

⁷Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 26, p. 108.

⁸Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 38, p. 150. Varillas says that Charles had a strong desire to see Luther.

⁹Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 26, p. 109.

the 6th of March, 1521, the summons to Luther to present himself within twenty-one days before the Diet at Worms was signed by the emperor. Enclosed in the citation was a safe-conduct, addressed "To the honorable, our well-beloved and pious Doctor Hartin Luther, of the order of Augustines,"¹⁰ and commanding all princes, lords, magistrates, and others to respect this safe-conduct under pain of the displeasure of the Emperor and the Empire. Gaspard Sturm, the imperial herald, was commissioned to deliver these documents to Luther and accompany him to Worms.¹¹

The fiat has gone forth. It expresses the will and purpose of a Higher than Charles. Luther is to bear testimony to the Gospel, not at the stake, but on the loftiest stage the world can furnish. The master of so many kingdoms and the lords of so many provinces must come to Worms, and there patiently wait and obediently listen while the miner's son speaks to them.¹² While the imperial herald is on his way to bring hither the man for whom they wait, let us turn to see what is at that moment taking place at the opposite poles of Christendom.

Far separated as are Rome and Wittemberg, there is yet a link binding together the two. An unseen Power regulates the march of events at both places, making them advance by equal steps. What wonderful harmony under antagonism! Let us turn first to Rome. It is Maunday-Thursday. On the balcony of the Metropolitan Cathedral, arrayed for one of the grand ceremonies of his Church, sits the Pope. Around him stand attendant priests, bearing lighted torches; and beneath him, crowding in silence the spacious area, their knees bent and their heads uncovered, are the assembled Romans. Leo is pronouncing, as the wont is before the festival of Easter, the terrible bull *In Coena Domini*.

¹⁰Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 38, p. 151

¹¹Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 26, p. 109.

¹²"It may perhaps appear strange," says Moaheim, "and even inconsistent with the laws of the Church, that a cause of a religious nature should be examined and decided in the public Diet. But it must be considered that these Diets in which the archbishops, bishops, and even certain abbots had their places, as well as the princes of the Empire, were not only political assemblies, but also provincial councils for Germany, to whose jurisdiction, by the ancient canon law, such causes as that of Luther properly belonged." (Eccl. Hist., cent. 16, bk. 4, sec. 1, ch. 2.)

This is a very ancient bull. It has undergone, during successive Pontificates, various alterations and additions, with the view of rendering its scope more comprehensive and its excommunications more frightful. It has been called “the pick of excommunications.” It was wont to be promulgated annually at Rome on the Thursday before Easter Sunday, hence its name the “Bull of the Lord’s Supper.” The bells were tolled, the cannon of St. Angelo were fired, and the crowd of priests that thronged the balcony around the Pope waved their tapers wildly, then suddenly extinguished them; in short, no solemnity was omitted that could add terror to the publication of the bull—superfluous task surely, when we think that a more frightful peal of cursing never rang out from that balcony, from which so many terrible excommunications have been thundered. All ranks and conditions of men, all nationalities not obedient to the Papal See, are most comprehensively and energetically cursed in the bull *In Coena Domini*. More especially are heretics of every name cursed. “We curse,” said the Pope, “all heretics Cathari, Patarins, Poor Men of Lyons, Arnoldists, Speronists, Wickliffites, Hussites, Fratricelli;” — “because,” said Luther, speaking aside, “they desired to possess the Holy Scriptures, and required the Pope to be sober and preach the Word of God.” “This formulary,” says Sleidan, “of excommunication coming afterwards into Luther’s hands, he rendered it into High Dutch, besprinkling it with some very witty and satirical animadversions.”¹³

This year a new name had been inserted in this curse, and a prominent place assigned it. It was the name of Martin Luther. Thus did Rome join him to all those witnesses for the truth who, in former ages, had fallen under her ban, and many of whom had perished in her fires. Casting him out of the Roman pale irrevocably, she united him with the Church spiritual and holy and catholic.

At the same moment that Rome fulfils and completes her course, Luther fulfils and completes his. He has now reached his furthest point of theological and ecclesiastical advancement. Step by step he has all these years been going forward, adding first one doctrine, then another, to his store of acquired knowledge; and at the same time, and by an equal process, has he been casting off, one after another,

¹³Sleidan, bk. 3, p. 42.

the errors of Romanism. The light around him has been waxing clearer and ever clearer, and now he has come to the meridian of his day. In his cell he was made to feel that he was utterly fallen, and wholly without power to save himself. This was his first lesson. The doctrine of a free justification-salvation by grace-was next revealed to him. As he stood encompassed by the darkness of despair, caused by the combined sense of his utter ruin and his utter inability, this doctrine beamed out upon him from the page of Scripture. The revelation of it was to him the very opening of the gates of Paradise. From these initial stages he soon came to a clear apprehension of the whole of what constituted the Reformed system-the nature and end of Christ's obedience and death; the office and work of the Holy Spirit; the sanctification of men by the instrumentality of the Word; the relation of good works to faith; the nature and uses of a Sacrament; the constituent principle of the Church, even belief in the truth and union to Christ. This last, taken in connection with another great principle to the knowledge of which he had previously attained, the sole infallible authority of Scripture, emancipated him completely from a thralldom which had weighed heavily upon him in the earlier stages of his career, the awe, even, in which he stood of Rome as the Church of Christ, and the obedience which he believed he owed the Pontiff as head of the Church. The last link of this bondage was now gone. He stood erect in the presence of a power before which the whole of Christendom wellnigh still bowed down. The study of Paul's Epistles and of the Apocalypse, and the comparison of both with the history of the past, brought Luther about this time to the full and matured conviction that the Church of Rome as it now existed was the predicted "Apostacy," and that the dominion of the Papacy was the reign of Antichrist. It was this that broke the spell of Rome, and took for him the sting out of her curse. This was a wonderful training, and not the least wonderful thing in it was the exact coincidence in point of time between the maturing of Luther's views and the great crisis in his career. The summons to the Diet at Worms found him in the very prime and fullness of his knowledge.

516 On the 24th of March the imperial herald, Gaspard Sturm, arrived at Wittemberg, and put into the hands of Luther the summons of the emperor to appear before the Diet at Worms.

Chapter 5: Luther's Journey and Arrival at Worms

Luther's Resolution—Alarm in Germany—The Reformer sets out—His Reception at Leipsic—Erfurt—Preaches—Eisenach—Sickness—Auguries of Evil—Luther's Courage—Will the Safe-conduct be respected?—Fears of his Friends—They advise him not to come on—His Reply—Enters Worms—Crowd in the Street—An Ill omened Pageant—The Princes throng his Apartment—Night and Sleep

Picture: The Princes Summoned before the Emperor

Picture: Leo X. pronouncing the Bull of the Lord's Supper

Picture: Luthers House at Frankfort

[330] “Will he come?” asked the members of the Diet of one another, when they had determined to summon Luther before them. The only man who did not hesitate a moment on that point was Luther himself. In the citation now in his hand he beheld the summons of a Greater than the emperor, and straightway he made ready to obey it. He knew that in the assembly before which he was to appear there was but one man on whom he could fully rely, the Elector Frederick. His safe-conduct might be violated as that of John Huss had been. In going to Worms he might be going to the stake. His opponents, he knew, thirsted for his blood, still not for a moment did he permit fear to make him waver in his resolution to go to Worms. There he should be able to bear testimony to the truth, and as to all beyond, it gave him no concern. “Fear not,” he wrote to Spalatin, the elector’s secretary, “that I shall retract a single syllable. With the help of Christ, I will never desert the Word on the battle-field.”¹ “I am called,” said he to his friends, when they expressed their fears; “it is ordered and decreed that I appear in that city. I will neither

¹L.Epp., 1 574. D’Aubigne, 2, 208.

recant nor flee. I will go to Worms in spite of all the gates of hell, and the prince of the power of the air.”²

The news that Luther had been summoned to the Diet spread rapidly through Germany, inspiring, wherever the tidings came, a mixed feeling of thankfulness and alarm. The Germans were glad to see the cause of their country and their Church assuming such proportions, and challenging examination and discussion before so august an assembly. At the same time they trembled when they thought what might be the fate of the man who was eminently their nation's representative, and by much the ablest champion of both its political and its religious rights. If Luther should be sacrificed nothing could compensate for his loss, and the movement which promised to bring them riddance of a foreign yoke, every year growing more intolerable, would be thrown back for an indefinite period. Many eyes and hearts, therefore, in all parts of Germany followed the monk as he went his doubtful way to Worms.

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On the 2nd of April the arrangements for his departure were completed. He did not set out alone. Three of his more intimate friends, members of the university, accompanied him. These were the courageous Amsdorff- Schurff, professor of jurisprudence, as timid as Amsdorff was bold, yet who shrank not from the perils of this journey-and Suaven, a young Danish nobleman, who claimed, as the representative of the students, the honour of attending his master.

Most tender was the parting between Luther and Melancthon. In Luther the young scholar had found again his country, his friends, his all. Now he was about to lose him. Sad at heart, he yearned to go with him, even should he be going to martyrdom. He implored, but in vain; for if Luther should fall, who but Philip could fill his place and carry on his work? The citizens were moved as well as the professors and youth of the university. They thronged the street to witness the departure of their great townsman, and it was amidst their tears that Luther passed out at the gate, and took his way over the great plains that are spread out around Wittemberg.

The imperial herald, wearing his insignia and displaying the imperial eagle, to show under what guardianship the travelers jour-

²Luth. Opp., 1, 987.

neyed, came first on horseback; after him rode his servant, and closing the little cavalcade was the humble wagon which contained Luther and his friends. This conveyance had been provided by the magistrates of Wittenberg at their own cost, and, provident of the traveller's comfort, it was furnished with an awning to shade him from the sun or cover him from the rain. ³

Everywhere, as they passed along, crowds awaited the arrival of the travelers. Villages poured out their inhabitants to see and greet the bold monk. At the gates of those cities where it was known that Luther would halt, processions, headed by the magistrates, waited to bid him welcome. There were exceptions, however, to the general cordiality. At Leipsic the Reformer was presented with simply the customary cup of wine, as much as to say, "Pass on." ⁴ But generally the population were touched with the heroism of the journey. In Luther they beheld a man who was offering himself on the altar of his country, and as they saw him pass they heaved a sigh as over one who should never return. His path was strewn with hints and warnings of coming fate, partly the fears of timid friends, and partly the menaces of enemies who strove by every means in their power to stop his journey, and prevent his appearance at the Diet.

His entrance into Erfurt, the city where he had come to the knowledge of the truth, and on the streets of which he had begged as a monk, was more like that of a warrior returning from a victorious campaign, than a humble doctor going to answer a charge of heresy. Hardly had he come in sight of its steeples, when a numerous cavalcade, composed of the members of the senate, the university, and two thousand burghers, ⁵ met him and escorted him into the city. Through streets thronged with spectators he was conducted to the old familiar building so imperishably associated with his history, the convent of the Augustines. On the Sunday after Easter he entered its great church, the door of which he had been wont, when a friar,

³Maimbourg has obligingly provided our traveler with a magnificent chariot and a guard of a hundred horsemen. There is not a particle of proof to show that this imposing cavalcade ever existed save on the page of this narrator. The Canon of Altenburg, writing from Worms to John, brother of Frederick the Elector, April 16th, 1521, says: "To day Mr. Martin arrived here in a common Saxon wagon." (Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 39, p. 152.)

⁴Letter of Canon of Altenburg to John of Saxony.

⁵Letter of Warbeccius, Canon of Altenburg. (Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 39, p. 152 - Additio.)

to open, and the floor of which he had been wont to sweep out; and from its pulpit he preached to an overflowing crowd, from the words so suitable to the season, "Peace be unto you" ([John 20:19](#)). Let us quote a passage of his sermon. Of the Diet-of the emperor, of himself, not a word: from beginning to end it is Christ and salvation that are held forth.

"Philosophers, doctors, and writers," said the preacher, "have endeavored to teach men the way to obtain everlasting life, and they have not succeeded. I will now tell it to you.

"There are two kinds of works-works not of ourselves, and these are good: our own works, they are of little worth. One man builds a church; another goes on a pilgrimage to St. Iago of Compostella, or St. Peter's; a third fasts, takes the cowl, and goes bare-foot; another does something else. All these works are nothingness, and will come to naught, for our own works have no virtue in them.

But I am now going to tell you what is the true work. God has raised one Man from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ, that he might destroy death, expiate sin, and shut the gates of hell. This is the work of salvation.

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"Christ, has vanquished! This is the joyful news! and we are saved by his work, and not by our own... Our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'Peace be unto you! behold my hands'-that is to say, Behold, O man! it is I, I alone, who have taken away thy sins, and ransomed thee; and now thou hast peace, saith the Lord."⁶

Such was the Divine wisdom which Luther dispensed to the men of Erfurt. It was ill their city that he had learned it; and well might he have added what the centurion said of his liberty: "With a great sum have I obtained this knowledge, which now I freely give to you."

Traversing ground every foot-breadth of which was familiar as forming the scene of his childhood, he came soon after to Eisenach, the city of the good "Shunammite." It must have called up many memories. Over it towered the Wartburg, where the Reformer was to open the second stage of his career, although this was hidden as yet. At every step his courage was put to the test. The nearer he drew to Worms the louder grew the threats of his enemies, the greater the fears of his friends. "They will burn you and reduce your

⁶Luth. Opp. (L) 12:485. D'Aubigne 2: 224-226.

body to ashes, as they did that of John Huss,” said one to him. His reply was that of a hero, but it was clothed in the grand imagery of the poet. “Though they should kindle a fire,” said he, “all the way from Worms to Wittenberg, the flames of which reached to heaven, I would walk through it in the name of the Lord, I would appear before them, I would enter the jaws of this Behemoth, and confess the Lord Jesus Christ between his teeth.”

All the way from Eisenach to Frankfort-on-the-Main, Luther suffered from sickness.⁷ This however produced no faintness of spirit. If health should serve him, well; but if not, still his journey must be performed; he should be carried to Worms in his bed. As to what might await him at the end of his journey he bestowed not a thought. He knew that he who preserved alive the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace still lived. If it was His pleasure he would, despite the rage of his foes, return safe from Worms; but if a stake awaited him there, he rejoiced to think that the truth would not perish with his ashes. With God he left it whether the Gospel would be better served by his death or by his life, only he would rather that the young emperor should not begin his reign by shedding his blood; if he must die, let it be by the hands of the Romans.

The Roman party had hoped that the monk would not dare set foot within the gates of Worms.⁸ They were told that he was on the road, but they did not despair by intrigues and menaces to make him turn back. They little knew the man they were trying to affright. To their dismay Luther kept his face steadfastly toward Worms, and was now almost under its walls. His approaching footsteps, coming nearer every hour, sounded, as it were, the knell of their power, and caused them greater terror than if a mighty army had been advancing against them.

Whispers began now to circulate in Worms that the Diet was not bound to respect the safe-conduct of a heretic. This talk coming to the ears of Luther’s friends gave them great uneasiness. Was the perfidy of Constance to be repeated? Even the elector shared in the prevalent alarm; for Spalatin sent to Luther, who was now near the city, to say to him not to enter. Fixing his eyes on the messenger,

⁷Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 39, p. 152.

⁸Letter of Canon of Altenburg to John of Saxony. (Seckendorf.)

Luther replied, "Go and tell your master that even should there be as many devils in Worms as tiles on the house-tops, still I will enter it."⁹ This was the sorest assault of all, coming as it did from one of his most trusted friends; but he vanquished it as he had done all previous ones, and what remained of his journey was done in peace.

It was ten o'clock in the morning of the 16th of April, when the old towers of Worms rose between him and the horizon. Luther, says Audin, sitting up in his car, began to sing the hymn which he had composed at Oppenheim two days before, "A strong Tower is our God."¹⁰ The sentinel on the look-out in the cathedral tower, descrying the approach of the cavalcade, sounded his trumpet. The citizens were at dinner, for it was now mid-day, but when they heard the signal they rushed into the street, and in a few minutes princes, nobles, citizens, and men of all nations and conditions, mingling in one mighty throng, had assembled to see the monk enter. To the last neither friend nor foe had really believed that he would come. Now, however, Luther is in Worms. [334]

The order of the cavalcade was the same as that in which it had quitted Wittemberg. The herald rode first, making way with some difficulty through the crowded street for the wagon in which, shaded by the awning, sat Luther in his monk's gown,¹¹ his face bearing traces of his recent illness, but there was a deep calm in the eyes whose glance Cardinal Cajetan liked so ill at Augsburg.

The evil auguries which had haunted the monk at every stage of his journey were renewed within the walls of Worms. Pressing through the crowd came a person in grotesque costume, displaying a great cross, such as is carried before the corpse when it is being borne to the grave, and chanting, in the same melancholy cadence in which mass is wont to be sung for the dead, this doleful requiem-

⁹Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 39, p. 152. "These words," says Seckendorf, "were remembered by many. They were repeated by Luther himself, a little while before his death, at Eisleben." He added, "I know not whether I would be as courageous now."

¹⁰Audin, 2, p. 90. The common opinion is that this hymn, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," was composed some years later. Audin's supposition, however, has great inherent probability, and there are some facts which seem to support it. The combined rhythm and strength of this hymn cannot be transferred to a translation.

¹¹"I entered Worms in a covered wagon and my monk's gown," said Luther afterwards. (Luth. Opp. 17, 587.)

“Advenisti, O desiderabilis! Quem expectabamus in tenebris!”

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Those who arranged this ill-omened pageant may have meant it for a little grim pleasantry, or they may have intended to throw ridicule upon the man who was advancing single-handed to do battle with both the temporal and spiritual powers; or it may have been a last attempt to quell a spirit which no former device or threat had been able to affright. But whatever the end in view, we recognize in this strange affair a most fitting, though doubtless a wholly undesigned, representation of the state and expectancies of Christendom at that hour. Had not the nations waited in darkness- darkness deep as that of those who dwell among the dead-for the coming of a deliverer? Had not such a deliverer been foretold? Had not Huss seen Luther's day a century off, and said to the mourners around his stake, as the patriarchs on their deathbed, “I die, but God will surely visit you?” The “hundred years” had revolved, and now the deliverer appears. He comes in humble guise-in cowl and frock of monk. He appears to many of his own age as a Greater appeared to His, “a root out of a dry ground.” How can this poor despised monk save us? men asked. But he brought with him that which far transcends the sword of conqueror-the Word, the Light; and before that Light fled the darkness. Men opened their eyes, and saw that already their fetters, which were ignorance and superstition, were rent. They were free.

The surging crowd soon pushed aside the bearer of the black cross, and drowned his doleful strains in the welcome which they accorded the man who, contrary to the expectation of every one, had at last entered their gates. Luther's carriage could advance at only a slow pace, for the concourse on the streets was greater than when the emperor had entered a few days previously. The procession halted at the hotel of the Knights of Rhodes, which conveniently adjoined the hall of the Diet. “On descending from his car,” says Pallavicino, “he said bravely, ‘God will be for me.’”¹³ This reveals to us the secret of Luther's courage.

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¹²“Lo, thou art come, O thou greatly desired one, whom we have waited for in the darkness of the grave.” (M. Adam, *Vita Lutheri*, p. 118.)

¹³“E nello smontar di carrozza disse forte: Iddio sard por me.” (Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 26, p. 109.)

After his recent illness, and the fatigue of his journey, now continued for fourteen days, the Reformer needed rest. The coming day, too, had to be thought of; eventful as the day now closing had been, the next would be more eventful still. But the anxiety to see the monk was too great to permit him so much as an hour's repose. Scarcely had he taken possession of his lodgings when princes, dukes, counts, bishops, men of all ranks, friends and foes, besieged his hotel and crowded into his apartments. When one relay of visitors had been dismissed, another waited for admission. In the midst of that brilliant throng Luther stood unmoved. He heard and replied to all their questions with calmness and wisdom. Even his enemies could not withhold their admiration at the dignity with which he bore himself. Where has the miner's son acquired those manners which princes might envy, that courage which heroes might strive in vain to emulate, and where has he learnt that wisdom which has seduced, say some- enlightened, say others-so many thousands of his countrymen, and which none of the theologians of Rome have been able to withstand? To friend and foe alike he was a mystery. Some revered him, says Pallavicino, as a prodigy of knowledge, others looked upon him as a monster of wickedness; the one class held him to be almost divine, the other believed him to be possessed by a demon. ¹⁴

This crowd of visitors, so varied in rank and so different in sentiments, continued to press around Luther till far into the night. They were now gone, and the Reformer was left alone. He sought his couch, but could not sleep. The events of the day had left him excited and restless. He touched his lute; he sang a verse of a favourite hymn; he approached the window and opened the casement. Beneath him were the roofs of the now silent city; beyond its walls, dimly descried, was the outline of the great valley through which the Rhine pours its floods; above him was the awful, fathomless, and silent vault. He lifted his eyes to it, as was his wont when his thoughts troubled him. ¹⁵ There were the stars, fulfilling their courses far above the tumults of earth, yet far beneath that throne on which sat a greater King than the monarch before whom he was to appear on the

¹⁴Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 26, p. 109.

¹⁵Worsley, vol. 1, p. 230.

morrow. He felt, as he gazed, a sense of sublimity filling his soul, and bringing with it a feeling of repose. Withdrawing his gaze, and closing the casement, he said, "I will lay me down and take quiet rest, for thou makest me dwell in safety."

Chapter 6: Luther Before the Diet at Worms

Luther's Supplications—Conducted to the Diet—The Crowd—Words of Encouragement—Splendor of the Diet—Significance of Luther's Appearance before it—Chancellor Eccius—Luther asked touching his Books—Owns their Authorship—Asked to Retract their Opinions—Craves Time to give an Answer—A Day's Delay granted—Charles's First Impressions of Luther—Morning of the 18th of May—Luther's Wrestlings—His Weakness—Strength not his own—Second Appearance before the Diet—His Speech—Repeats it in Latin—No Retraction—Astonishment of the Diet—The Two Great Powers

Picture: Luther at the Casement

Picture: View in Wittemberg

Picture: View of Worms

Picture: Luther Attacked by Masked Horsemen in the Thuringian Forest

Next morning—Wednesday, the 17th of April—at eight o'clock, the hereditary Marshal of the Empire, Ulrich von Pappenheim, cited Luther to appear, at four of the afternoon, before his Imperial Majesty and the States of the Empire. An important crisis, not only in the life of Luther, but also in the history of that Reformation which he had so recently inaugurated, was fast approaching, and the Reformer prepared himself to meet it with all the earnestness that marked his deeply religious nature. He remained all forenoon within doors, spending most of the time in prayer. His supplications and the moans that accompanied them were audible outside his chamber door. From kneeling before the throne of the Eternal God, with whom lay the issues of the coming strife, Luther rose up to stand before the throne of Charles. At four the Marshal of the Empire, accompanied by a herald, returned, and Luther set out with them to the Diet. But it was no easy matter to find their way to the town-hall, where the princes were assembled. The crowd in the streets was greater than

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on the previous day. Every window had its group of faces; every house-top had its cluster of spectators, many of whom manifested considerable enthusiasm as they caught sight of the Reformer. The marshal with his charge had proceeded but a little way, when he found that he would never be able to force a passage through so dense a multitude. He entered a private dwelling, passed out at the back door and conducting Luther through the gardens of the Knights of Rhodes, brought him to the town-hall; the people rushing down alleys, or climbing to the roofs, to catch a glimpse of the monk as he passed on to appear before Charles.

Arrived at the town-hall they found its entrance blocked up by a still denser crowd. The soldiers had to clear a way by main force. In the vestibule and ante-chambers of the hall every inch of space, every recess and window-sill was occupied by courtiers and their friends, to the number of not less than 5,000-Germans, Italians, Spaniards, and other nationalities.

As they were elbowing their way, and were now near the door at which they were to be ushered into the presence of the Diet, a hand was laid upon Luther's shoulder. It was that of the veteran George Freundsberg, whose name was a synonym with his countrymen for gallantry. He had ere this been in many a hard fight, but never, he felt, had he been in so hard a one as that to which the man on whose shoulder his hand now rested was advancing. "My monk, my good monk," said the soldier, "you are now going to face greater peril than any of us have ever encountered on the bloodiest field; but if

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you are right, and feel sure of it, go on, and God will fight for you."¹ Hardly had these words been uttered, when the door opened, and Luther passed in and stood before the august assembly.

The first words which reached his ear after he had entered the Diet, whispered to him by someone as he passed through the throng of princes to take his place before the throne of Charles, were cheering: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak;" while other voices said, "Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Thus were

¹Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 42, p. 156.

the hopes which he expressed when he alighted at his hotel-door fulfilled. God was with him, for this was His voice.

The sudden transition from the uneasy crowd to the calm grandeur of the Diet had its effect upon him. For a moment he seemed intimidated and bewildered. He felt all eyes suddenly turned upon him; even the emperor scrutinised him keenly. But the agitation of the Reformer quickly passed, and his equanimity and composure returned. Luther advanced till he stood in front of the throne of Charles.

“Never,” says D’Aubigne, “had man appeared before so imposing an assembly. The Emperor Charles V., whose sovereignty [338] extended over great part of the old and new worlds; his brother the Archduke Ferdinand; six electors of the Empire, most of whose descendants now wear the kingly crown; twenty-four dukes, the majority of whom were independent sovereigns over countries more or less extensive, and among whom were some whose names afterwards became formidable to the Reformation; the Duke of Alva and his two sons; eight margraves; thirty archbishops, bishops, and abbots; seven ambassadors, including those from the Kings of France and England; the deputies of ten free cities; a great number of princes, counts, and sovereign barons; the Papal nuncios-in all two hundred and four persons: such was the imposing court before which appeared Martin Luther.

“This appearance was of itself a signal victory over the Papacy. The Pope had condemned the man, and he was now standing before a tribunal which, by this very act, set itself above the Pope. The Pope had laid him under an interdict, and cut him off from all human society, and yet he was summoned in respectful language, and received before the most august assembly in the world. The Pope had condemned him to perpetual silence, and he was now about to speak before thousands of attentive hearers drawn together from the furthest parts of Christendom. An immense revolution had thus been effected by Luther’s instrumentality. Rome was already descending from her throne, and it was the voice of a monk that caused this humiliation.”²

²D’Aubigne, vol. 2, p. 237.

Let us take a nearer view of the scene as it now presented itself to the eyes of Luther. Chief in this assemblage of the powers spiritual and temporal of Christendom, sat the emperor. He wore the Spanish dress, his only ornaments being the usual ostrich-plume, and a string of pearls circling his breast, from which depended the insignia of the Golden Fleece. A step lower than the imperial platform, on a chair of state, sat his brother, Archduke Ferdinand. On the right and left of the throne were the six electors of the Empire—the three ecclesiastical electors on the emperor’s right, and the three secular electors on his left. At his feet sat the two Papal nuncios—on this side Caraccioli, and on that Aleander. On the floor in front of the imperial seat was the table at which were the clerks and Dr. Eccius, who interrogated Luther, and who is not to be confounded with the Dr. Eck with whom the Reformer held the disputation at Leipsic. From the table extending backwards to the wall were rows of benches, which were occupied by the members of the Diet, princes, counts, archbishops, and bishops, the deputies of the towns and the ambassadors of foreign States. Here and there at various points of the hall were stationed guards, with polished armor and glittering halberds.

The sun was near his setting. His level rays, pouring in at the windows and falling in rich mellow light on all within, gave additional splendor to the scene. It brought out in strong relief the national costumes, and variously coloured dresses and equipments, of the members of the Diet. The yellow silken robes of the emperor, the velvet and ermine of the electors, the red hat and scarlet gown of the cardinal, the violet robe of the bishop, the rich doublet of the knight, covered with the badges of his rank or valor, the more sombre attire of the city deputy, the burnished steel of the warrior—all showed to advantage in the chastened radiance which was now streaming in from the descending luminary. In the midst of that scene, which might have been termed gay but for its overwhelming solemnity, stood Luther in his monk’s frock.

John Eck or Eccius, Chancellor of the Archbishop of Treves,³ and spokesman of the Diet, rose in deep silence, and in a sonorous voice repeated, first in Latin and then in German, the following

³A learned man,” says Pallavicino, “a Catholic, and an intimate friend of Aleander’s.”

words: "Martin Luther, his sacred and invincible Majesty has cited you before his throne, with advice and counsel of the States of the Holy Roman Empire, to answer two questions. First, do you acknowledge these books," pointing with his finger to a pile of volumes on the table, "to have been written by you? Secondly, are you prepared to retract and disavow the opinions you have advanced in them?"⁴

Luther was on the point of owning the author-ship of the books, when his friend Schurf, the jurist, hastily interposed. "Let the titles of the books be read," said he.

The Chancellor Eck advanced to the table, and read, one after another, the titles of the volumes-about twenty in all.⁵

This done, Luther now spoke. His bearing was respectful, and his voice low. Some members of the Diet thought that it trembled a little; and they fondly hoped that a retraction was about to follow.

The first charge he frankly acknowledged. "Most gracious Emperor, and most gracious Princes and Lords," said he, "the books that have just been named are mine. As to the second, seeing it is a question which concerns the salvation of souls, and in which the Word of God than which nothing is greater in heaven or in earth is interested, I should act imprudently were I to reply without reflection. I entreat your imperial Majesty, with all humility, to allow me time, that I may reply without offending against the Word of God."⁶

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Nothing could have been more wise or more becoming in the circumstances. The request for delay, however, was differently interpreted by the Papal members of the Diet. He is breaking his fall, said they-he will retract. He has played the heretic at Wittemberg, he will act the part of the penitent at Worms. Had they seen deeper into Luther's character, they would have come to just the opposite conclusion. This pause was the act of a man whose mind was thoroughly made up, who felt how unalterable and indomitable was his resolve, and who therefore was in no haste to proclaim it, but with admirable self-control could wait for the time, the form, the circumstances in which to make the avowal so that its full and

⁴Luth. Opp. (L) 17, 588. D'Aubigne, vol. 2, p. 238.

⁵Pallavicino tells us that these had been collected by the industry of Aleander.

⁶Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 26, p. 110.

concentrated strength might be felt, and it might appear to all to be irrevocable.

The Diet deliberated. A day's delay was granted the monk. Tomorrow at this time must he appear again before the emperor and the assembled estates, and give his final answer. Luther bowed; and instantly the herald was by his side to conduct him to his hotel.

The emperor had not taken his eyes off Luther all the time he stood in his presence. His worn frame, his thin visage, which still bore traces of recent illness, and, as Pallavicino has the candor to acknowledge, "the majesty of his address, and the simplicity of his action and costume," which contrasted strongly with the theatrical airs and the declamatory address of the Italians and Spaniards, produced on the young emperor an unfavorable impression, and led to a depreciatory opinion of the Reformer. "Certainly," said Charles, turning to one of his courtiers as the Diet was breaking up, "certainly that monk will never make a heretic of me."⁷

Scarcely had the dawn of the 18th of April (1521) broke, when the two parties were busy preparing for the parts they were respectively to act in the proceedings of a day destined to influence so powerfully the condition of after-ages. The Papal faction, with Aleander at its head, had met at an early hour to concert their measures.⁸ Nor was this wakeful activity on one side only. Luther, too, "prevented the dawning, and cried."

We shall greatly err if we suppose that it was an iron firmness of physical nerve, or great intrepidity of spirit, that bore Luther up and carried him through these awful scenes; and we shall not less err if we suppose that he passed through them without enduring great suffering of soul. The services he was destined to perform demanded a nature exquisitely strung, highly emotional, as well as powerfully reflective, with a full complement of the truest sympathies and tenderest sensibilities. But such a constitution renders its possessor, to a proportional extent, liable to the access of tormenting anxieties and gloomy forecastings. There were moments in which Luther gave way to these feelings. That they did not crush him, was owing to an influence higher far than his natural powers,

⁷"Costui certamente non mi farebbe mai diventar Eretico." (Pallavicino, lib. 1, p. 110.)

⁸Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 27, p. 110.

which filled his soul and sustained him till the crisis had passed. The sweet, gracious, omnipotent Spirit of God descended upon him, and shed a divine serenity and strength into his mind; but so sweetly and gently did it infuse itself into, and work along with, his own natural faculties, that Luther was sensible of the indwelling influence only by his feeling that—to use Melancthon’s beautiful words—“he was more than himself.” He was also made sensible of this by the momentary withdrawal at times of this upholding power.⁹ Then he was again simply himself weak as other men; and difficulties would of a sudden thicken around him, and dangers would all at once rise like so many giants in his path, and threaten him with destruction. So did it befall him on the morning of this eventful day. He felt as if he were forsaken. A horror of great darkness filled his soul; he had come to Worms to perish.

It was not the thought that he would be condemned and led to the stake that shook the Reformer on the morning of his second appearance before the Imperial Diet. It was something more terrible than to die—than to die a hundred times. The crisis had come, and he felt himself unable to meet it. The upholding power which had sustained him in his journey thither, and which had made the oft-repeated threat of foe, and the gloomy anticipation of friend, as ineffectual to move him as ocean’s spray is to overturn the rock, had been withdrawn. What will he do? He sees a terrible catastrophe approaching; he will falter before the Diet; he will wreck his cause; he will blast the hopes of future ages; and the enemies of Christ and the Gospel will triumph.

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Let us draw near to his closet-door, and hear his groans and strong cryings! They reveal to us the deep agony of his soul.

He has already been some considerable while engaged in prayer. His supplication is drawing to a close. “O God! my God, hearest thou me not?... My God, art thou dead?... No! thou canst not die. Thou hidest thyself only. Thou hast chosen me for this work; I know it well!... Act then, O God!... Stand at my side, for the sake of thy well-beloved Jesus Christ, who is my defense, my shield, and my strong tower.”

⁹Seckendorf (lib. 1, p. 156) gives extracts from Luther’s letters to Spalatin, descriptive of his feelings at Worms, which prove this.

Then comes an interval of silence. Again we hear his voice. His wrestlings once more become audible.

“Lord, where stayest thou?... O my God! where art thou? Come, come! I am ready... I am ready to lay down my life for thy truth... patient as a lamb. For it is the cause of justice-it is thine... I will never separate myself from thee; neither now, nor through eternity. And though the world should be filled with devils-though my body, which is still the work of thy hands, should be slain, should be racked on the wheel... cut in pieces... reduced to ashes... my soul is thine... Yes! thy Word is my assurance of it. My soul belongs to thee! It shall abide for ever with thee... Amen!... O God! help me... Amen!”¹⁰ This is one of those solemn points in history where the seen touches the unseen; where earth and heaven meet; where man the actor below, and the Great Actor above, come both together, side by side upon the stage. Such points in the line of history are rare; they occur only at long intervals, but they do occur. The veil is rent; a hand is stretched out; a light breaks in as from a world separated indeed from that on which the terrestrial actors are placed, yet lying at no great distance from it, and the reader of history at such moments feels as if he were nearing the very precincts of the Eternal Throne, and walking on mysterious and holy ground.

Luther now rises from his knees, and in the calm reigning in his soul feels that already he has received an answer to his prayer. He sits down to arrange his thoughts, to draft, in outline, his defense, and to search in Holy Scripture for passages wherewith to fortify it. This task finished, he laid his left hand upon the sacred volume, which lay open on the table before him, and raising his right hand to heaven, he swore to remain ever faithful to the Gospel, and to confess it, even should he have to seal his confession with his blood. After this the Reformer experienced a still deeper peace.

At four of the clock, the grand marshal and the herald presented themselves. Through crowded streets, for the excitement grew greater with each passing hour, was the Reformer conducted

¹⁰“This prayer,” says D’Aubigne, “is to be found in a collection of documents relative to Luther’s appearance at Worms, under No. 16, in the midst of safe-conducts and other papers of a similar nature. One of his friends had no doubt overheard it, and has transmitted it to posterity. In our opinion, it is one of the most precious documents in all history.” (Hist. Reform., vol. 2, p. 243.)

to the town-hall. On arriving in the outer court they found the Diet in deep deliberation. When Luther should be admitted no one could say. One hour passed, then another; ¹¹ the Reformer was still standing amid the hum and clamor of the multitude that filled the area. So long a delay, in such circumstances, was fitted to exhaust him physically, and to ruffle and distract him mentally. But his tranquillity did not for a moment forsake him. He was in a sanctuary apart, communing with One whom the thousands around him saw not. The night began to fall; torches were kindled in the hall of the assembly. Through the ancient windows came their glimmering rays, which, mingling with the lights of evening, curiously speckled the crowd that filled the court, and imparted an air of quaint grandeur to the scene.

At last the door opened, and Luther entered the hall. If this delay was arranged, as some have conjectured, by Aleander, in the hope that when Luther presented himself to the Diet he would be in a state of agitation, he must have been greatly disappointed. The Reformer entered in perfect composure, and stood before the emperor with an air of dignity. He looked around on that assembly of princes, and on the powerful monarch who presided over them, with a calm, steadfast eye.

The chancellor of the Bishop of Treves, Dr. Eck, rose and demanded his answer. What a moment! The fate of ages hangs upon it. The emperor leans forward, the princes sit motionless, the very guards are still: all eager to catch the first utterances of the monk. [341]

He salutes the emperor, the princes, and the lords graciously. He begins his reply in a full, firm, but modest tone. ¹² Of the volumes on the table, the authorship of which he had acknowledged the day before, there were, he said, three sorts. There was one class of his writings in which he had expounded, with all simplicity and plainness, the first principles of faith and morals. Even his enemies themselves allowed that he had done so in a manner conformable to Scripture, and that these books were such as all might read with profit. To deny these would be to deny truths which all admit-truths which are essential to the order and welfare of Christian society.

¹¹Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 41, p. 154.

¹²Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 41, p. 154.

In the second class of his productions he had waged war against the Papacy. He had attacked those errors in doctrine, those scandals in life, and those tyrannies in ecclesiastical administration and government, by which the Papacy had entangled and fettered the conscience, had blinded the reason, and had depraved the morals of men, thus destroying body and soul. They themselves must acknowledge that it was so. On every side they heard the cry of oppression. Law and obedience had been weakened, public morals polluted, and Christendom desolated by a host of evils temporal and spiritual. Should he retract this class of his writings, what would happen? Why, that the oppressor would grow more insolent, that he would propagate with greater licence than ever those pernicious doctrines which had already destroyed so many souls, and multiply those grievous exactions, those most iniquitous extortions which were impoverishing the substance of Germany and transferring its wealth to other countries. Nay, not only would the yoke that now weighs upon the Christian people be rendered heavier by his retractation, it would become in a sense legitimate, for his retractation would, in the circumstances, be tantamount to giving this yoke the sanction of his Serene Majesty, and of all the States of the Empire. He should be the most unhappy of men. He should thus have sanctioned the very iniquities which he had denounced, and reared a bulwark around those very oppressions which he had sought to overthrow. Instead of lightening the burden of his countrymen he should have made it ten-fold heavier, and himself would have become a cloak to cover every kind of tyranny.

There was a third class of his writings in which he said he had attacked those persons who put themselves forward as the defenders of the errors which had corrupted the faith, the scandals which had disgraced the priesthood, and the exactions which had robbed the people and ground them into the dust. These individuals he may not have treated with much ceremony; it may be that he had assailed them with an acrimony unbecoming his ecclesiastical profession; but although the manner may have been faulty, the thing itself was right, and he could not retract it, for that would be to justify his adversaries in all the impieties they had uttered, and all the iniquities they had done.

But he was a man, he continued, and not God, and he would defend himself not otherwise than Christ had done. If he had spoken evil or written evil, let them bear witness of that evil. He was but dust and ashes, liable every moment to err, and therefore it well became him to invite all men to examine what he had written, and to object if they had aught against it. Let him but be convinced from the Word of God and right reason that he was in error, and he should not need to be asked twice to retract, he would be the first to throw his books into the flames.¹³

In conclusion, he warned this assembly of monarchs of a judgment to come: a judgment not beyond the grave only, but on this side of it: a judgment in time. They were on their trial. They, their kingdoms, their crowns, their dynasties, stood at a great Bar. It was to them the day of visitation; it was now to be determined whether they were to be planted in the earth, whether their thrones should be stable, and their power should continue to flourish, or whether their houses should be razed, and their thrones swept away in a deluge of wrath, in a flood of present evils, and of eternal desolation.

He pointed to the great monarchies of former ages—to Egypt, to Babylon, to Nineveh, so mighty in their day, but which, by fighting against God, had brought upon themselves utter ruin; and he counselled them to take warning by these examples if they would escape the destruction that overtook them. “You should fear,” said he, “lest the reign of this young and noble prince, on whom (under God) we build such lofty expectations, not only should begin, but should continue and close, under the most gloomy auspices. I might speak of the Pharaohs, of the Kings of Babylon, and those of Israel, whose labours never more effectually contributed to their own destruction, than when they sought by counsels, to all appearance most wise, to strengthen their dominion. ‘God removeth mountains and they know it not who overturneth them in his anger.’”

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Having thus spoken, Luther sat clown and rested for a few minutes. He then rose once more, and repeated in Latin what he had said in German. The chancellor had made request that he do so, chiefly for the emperor’s sake, who understood German but imperfectly. Luther spoke with equal facility and unabated animation in

¹³Sarpi, *Hist. Conc. Trent.*, tom. 1, pp. 32, 33; Basle, 1738.

the second as in the first delivery of his address. He had occupied in all two hours. ¹⁴

[343] To their amazement, the princes found that a change had somehow come over the scene. Luther no longer stood at their bar—they had come suddenly to stand at his. The man who two hours before had seemed to them the accused, was now transformed into the judge—a righteous and awful judge—who, unawed by the crowns they wore and the armies they commanded, was entreating, admonishing, and reproving them with a severe but wholesome fidelity, and thundering forth their doom, should they prove disobedient, with a solemnity and authority before which they trembled. “Be wise, ye kings.” What a light has the subsequent history of Europe shed upon the words of Luther! and what a monument are the Popish kingdoms at this day of the truth of his admonition!

[344] At the conclusion of Luther’s address Dr. Eck again rose, and with a fretted air and in peevish tones ¹⁵ said, addressing Luther: “You have not answered the question put to you. We did not call you here to bring into question the authority of Councils; there can be no dispute on that point here. We demand a direct and precise answer: will you, or will you not, retract?”

Unmoved, Luther replied: “Since your most Serene Majesty, and your High Mightiness, require from me a direct and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this. I cannot submit my faith either to the Pope or to the Councils, because it is clear as day they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless, therefore, I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or on plain

¹⁴Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 27, p. 111. Pallavicino, who has given Aleander’s speech before the Diet at such great length, and in such eloquent phrase, has devoted scarcely more than half a page to Luther’s. The effect of Aleander’s address evaporated in a week: Luther’s has been stirring men these three centuries, and its influence is still powerful for good. For the disparity of the two reports, however, we do not blame the historian of the Council of Trent. His narrative, he tells us, was compiled from original documents in the Vatican Library, and especially the letters of Aleander, and it was natural perhaps that Aleander should make but short work with the oration of his great opponent. We have Luther’s speech from German sources. It is given with considerable fullness by D’Aubigne, who adds, “This speech, as well as all the other expressions we quote, is taken literally from authentic documents. See L. Opp. (L) 17, 776-780.” (D’Aubigne, vol 2, p. 248, foot-note.)

¹⁵Sleidan, bk. 3, p. 44.

and clear grounds of reason, so that conscience shall bind me to make acknowledgment of error, I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything contrary to conscience." And then, looking round on the assembly, he said-and the words are among the sublimest in history-" Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me. Amen." ¹⁶

These words still thrill us after three centuries. The impression which they made on the princes was overpowering, and a murmur of applause, as emphatic as the respect due to the imperial presence permitted, burst out in the Diet. Not from all, however; its Papal partisans were dismayed. The monk's NO had fallen upon them like a thunderbolt. From that hall that NO would go forth, and travel throughout Christendom, and it would awaken as it rolled onward the aspirations of liberty, and summon the nations to rise and break the yoke of Rome. Rome had lost the battle. After this it mattered absolutely nothing what her champions in the Diet might do with Luther. They might burn him, but to what avail? The fatal word had already been spoken; the decisive blow had been struck. A stake could neither reverse the defeat they had sustained, nor conceal, although it might enhance, the glory of the victory that Luther had won. Grievous, inexpressibly grievous, was their mortification. Could nothing be done?

Luther was bidden withdraw for a little; and during his absence the Diet deliberated. It was easy to see that a crisis had arisen, but not so easy to counsel the steps by which it was to be met. They resolved to give him another opportunity of retracting. Accordingly he was called in, led again in front of the emperor's throne, and asked to pronounce over again-now the third time-his YES or NO. With equal simplicity and dignity he replied that "he had no other answer to give than that which he had already given." In the calmness of his voice, in the steadfastness of his eye, and in the leonine lines of his rugged German face, the assembly read the stern, indomitable resolve of his soul. Alas! for the partisans of the Papacy. The No could not be recalled. The die had been cast irrevocably.

There are two Powers in the world, and there are none other greater than they. The first is the Word of God without man, and

¹⁶Hier stehe ich. Ich kann nicht anders. Gott helfe mir. Amen."

the second is conscience within him. These two Powers, at Worms, came into conflict with the combined forces of the world. We have seen the issue. A solitary and undefended monk stood up as the representative of conscience enlightened and upheld by the Word of God. Opposed to him was a power which, wielding the armies of emperors, and the anathemas of Popes, yet met utter discomfiture. And so has it been all along in this great war. Victory has been the constant attendant of the one power, defeat the as constant attendant of the other. Triumph may not always have come in the guise of victory; it may have come by the cord, or by the axe, or by the fiery stake; it may have worn the semblance of defeat; but in every case it has been real triumph to the cause, while the worldly powers which have set themselves in opposition have been slowly consumed by their own efforts, and have been undermining their dominion by the very successes which they thought were ruining their rival.

Chapter 7: Luther put Under the Ban of the Empire [345]

The Movement Widening—Rising of the Diet—The Draught of Beer—Frederick’s Joy—Resolves to Protect Luther—Mortification of Papal Party—Charles’s Proposal to Violate Safe-Conduct—Rejected with Indignation—Negotiations opened with Luther—He Quits Worms—The Emperor fulminates against him his Ban—The Reformel Seized by Masked Horsemen—Carried to the Wartburg

Picture: George Spalatin, of the Ecclesiastical Council of Saxony
Picture: Dr. Justus Jonas, Professor of Theology at Wittenberg

Our line of narration has, hitherto, been in the main continuous. We have followed the current of Protestant development, which has flowed so far within well-defined channels. But now we have reached the point where the movement notably widens. We see it branching out into other countries, and laying hold on the political combinations and movements of the age. We must therefore ascend, and take a more extensive survey of the stage of Christendom than we have as yet had occasion to do, noting the marvellously varied forms, and the infinitely diversified results, in which Protestantism displays itself. It is necessary to mark not only the new religious centers it is planting, but the currents of thought which it is creating; the new social life to which it is giving birth; the letters and arts of which it is becoming the nurse; the new communities and States with which it is covering Christendom, and the career of prosperity it is opening to the nations, making the aspect of Europe so unlike what it has been these thousand years past.

But first let us succinctly relate the events immediately following the Diet of Worms, and try to estimate the advance the Protestant movement had made, and the position in which we leave it at the moment when Luther entered into his “Patmos.”

“The Diet will meet again to-morrow to hear the emperor’s decision,” said Chancellor Eck, dismissing the members for the night.

The streets through which the princes sought their homes were darkened but not deserted. Late as the hour was, crowds still lingered in the precincts of the Diet, eager to know what the end would be. At last Luther was led out between two imperial officers. "See, see," said the bystanders, "there he is, in charge of the guard!... Are they taking you to the prison?" they shouted out. "No," replied Luther, "they are conducting me to my hotel." The crowd instantly dispersed, and the city was left to the quiet of the night. Spalatin and many friends followed the Reformer to his lodgings. They were exchanging mutual congratulations, when a servant entered, bearing a silver jug filled with Eimbeck beer. Presenting it to the doctor, the bearer said, "My master invites you to refresh yourself with this draught." "Who is the prince," asked Luther, "who so graciously remembers me?" It was the aged Duke Eric of Brunswick, one of the Papal members of the Diet. Luther raised the vessel to his lips, took a long draught, and then putting it down, said, "As this day Duke Eric has remembered me, so may the Lord Jesus Christ remember him in the hour of his last struggle." Not long after this, Duke Eric of Brunswick lay dying. Seeing a young page standing by his bedside, he said to him, "Take the Bible, and read in it to me." The page, opening the Bible, read out these words: "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to me, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. ¹ Duke Eric was refreshed in his turn. When his heart and strength were failing him a golden cup was put to his lips, and he drank therefrom a draught of the Water of Life.

The Elector Frederick was overjoyed at the appearance Luther had made before the Diet. The force and pertinency of his matter, the eloquence of his words, his intrepid yet respectful bearing, had not only delighted the sovereign of Saxony, but had made a deep impression on the princes of the Diet. From that hour many of them became attached friends of Luther and the Reformation. Some of them openly avowed their change of sentiment at the time; in others the words of Luther bore fruit in after-years. Frederick was henceforward more resolved than ever to protect the Reformer; but knowing that the less his hand was seen in the matter, the more

¹Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 44, Additio 1, p. 160.

effectually would he further the cause and shield its champion, he avoided personal intercourse with the Reformer.² On one occasion only did the two men meet.

The mortification of the Papal party was extreme. They redoubled their activity; they laid snares to entrap the Reformer. They invited him to private conferences with the Archbishop of Treves; they submitted one insidious proposal after another, but the constancy of the Reformer was not to be overcome. Meanwhile Alexander and his conclave had been closeted with the emperor, concocting measures of another kind. Accordingly, at the meeting of the Diet next day, the decision of Charles, written in his own hand,³ was delivered and read. It set forth that after the example of his Catholic ancestors, the Kings of Spain and Austria, etc., he would defend, to the utmost of his ability, the Catholic faith and the Papal chair. "A single monk," said he, "misled by his own folly, has risen against the faith of Christendom. To stay such impiety, I will sacrifice my kingdom, my treasures, my friends, my body, my blood, my life, and my soul."⁴ I am about to dismiss the Augustine Luther. I shall then proceed against him and his adherents as contumacious heretics, by excommunication, by interdict, and by every means calculated to destroy them."

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But the zeal of Charles had outrun his powers. This proscription could not be carried out without the consent of the States. The announcement of the emperor's decision raised a storm in the Diet. Two parties instantly declared themselves. Some of the Papal party, especially the Elector of Brandenburg, demanded that Luther's safe-conduct should be disregarded, and that the Rhine should receive his ashes, as it had done those of John Huss a century before.⁵ But, to his credit, Louis, Elector Palatine, expressed instant and utter abhorrence of the atrocious proposal. True, he said, Huss was burned at the stake, but ever since calamity has never ceased to pursue

²Ibid., lib. 1, sec. 42, Additio 1, p. 157.

³Cochlaeus, p. 32. Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 27, p. 111.

⁴Pero aver egli statuito d' impiegare i regni, i tesori, gli amici, il corpo, il sangue la vita, e lo spirito." (Pallavicino, lib. 1, p. 112.) How affecting these words when one thinks of what now is the condition of the kingdom, the treasures, and the royal house of Spain!

⁵Sleidan, bk. 3, p. 44. Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 44, p. 160. Polano, Hist. Counc. Trent, bk. 1, p. 14; Lond., 1629.

Germany. We dare not, said he, erect a second scaffold. He was joined by Duke George, whose repudiation of the proposed infamy was the more emphatic that he was Luther's avowed enemy. That the princes of Germany should for a moment entertain the purpose of violating a safe-conduct, was a thing he held impossible. They never would bring such a stain upon the honour of the Fatherland; nor would they open the reign of the young emperor with such an evil augury. ⁶ The Bavarian nobles, though mostly Papal, also protested against the violation of the public faith. The proposition met with the fate it deserved; it was expelled the Diet with scorn and indignation.

The extreme men of the Papal party would, without hesitation, have planted the Reformer's stake, but what would have been the result? A civil war in Germany the very next day. The enthusiasm of all classes was immense. Even Dean Cochlaeus and Cardinal Pallavicino assure us that there were hundreds of armed men in Worms itself, ready to unsheathe the sword and demand blood for blood. Only a dozen miles away, in his strong castle of Ebernburg, "the refuge of the Righteous," was the valorous Sickingen, and the fiery knight Hutten, at the head of a corps of men-at-arms amounting to many thousands, ready to descend on Worms, should Luther be sacrificed, to hold a reckoning with all those who were concerned in his death. From the most distant cities of Germany men watched, their hands on their sword-hilts, to see what would happen at Worms. The moderate men among the Papal members of the Diet were well aware that to violate the safe-conduct, would simply be to give the signal for outbreak and convulsion from one end of Germany to the other.

Nor could Charles be blind to so great a danger. Had he violated the safe-conduct, his first would probably have been his last Diet; for the Empire itself would have been imperilled. But if we may trust historians of name, ⁷ his conduct in this matter was inspired by nobler sentiments than these of self-interest. In opposing the violation of the plighted faith of the Empire, he is reported to have

⁶Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 44, Additio 1, p. 160.

⁷Seckendorf (quoting from Altingius), lib. 1, sec. 44, Additio 1: Pallavicino denies that it was proposed to violate the safe-conduct. He founds his denial upon the silence of Aleander. But the Papal nuncio's silence, which is exceedingly natural, can weigh but little against the testimony of so many historians.

said that "though faith should be banished from all the earth, it ought to find refuge with princes." Certainly a kingly sentiment, well becoming so powerful a potentate, but there was not wanting a little alloy in its gold. War was then on the point of breaking out between him and the King of France. Charles only half trusted the Pope, and even that was trusting him a little too much. The Pope had just concluded a secret treaty with both kings,⁸ Charles and Francis, pledging his aid to both, with, of course, the wise reservation of giving it only to the one by aiding whom he should, as future events might show, most effectually aid himself. This double-handed policy on the part of Leo, Charles met by tactics equally astute. In the game of checking the Pope, which he found he must needs play, he judged that a living Luther would be a more valuable counter than a dead one. "Since the Pope greatly feared Luther's doctrine," says Vetteri, "he designed to hold him in check with that rein."⁹

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The result of so many conflicting yet conspiring circumstances was that Luther departed in peace from those gates out of which no man had expected ever to see him come alive. On the morning of the 26th April, surrounded by twenty gentlemen on horseback, and a crowd of people who accompanied him beyond the walls, Luther left Worms.¹⁰ His journey back was accomplished amid demonstrations of popular interest more enthusiastic even than those which had signalled his progress thither. A few days after he was gone, the emperor fulminated his "edict" against him, placing him beyond the pale of law, and commanding all men, whenever the term of Luther's safe-conduct expired, to withhold from him food and drink, succour and shelter, to apprehend him and send him bound to the emperor. This edict was drafted by Aleander, and ratified at a meeting of the Diet which was held, not in the hall of assembly, but in the emperor's own chamber. The Elector Frederick, the Elector Palatine, and many others, had ere this left Worms. The edict was dated the 8th of May, but in point of fact the imperial signature was appended to it on the 26th of May, as Pallavicino tells us, in the

⁸The imperial proscription of Luther is said to have been dated on the same day on which the treaty with the Pope was concluded. (Ranke, *Hist. of the Popes*, vol. 1, p. 65; Bohn's edit., Lond., 1847.)

⁹*Sommario della Storia d' Italia*. (Ranke, vol. 1, p. 66.)

¹⁰Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 28, p. 114.

cathedral church of Worms, after the celebration of high mass; the design of the ante-dating being, the same writer says, to give to the edict the appearance of carrying with it the authority of a full Diet. ¹¹ This edict was more discursive than such documents usually are. Its style, instead of being formal and stately, was figurative and rhetorical. It opened with a profusion of epithets meant to be descriptive of the great heretic of Wittemberg; it ran on, in equally fertile vein, in an enumeration of the heresies, blasphemies, and vices into which he had fallen, and the crimes to which he was inciting the People- “schism, war, murder, robbery, incendiarism”-and it foretold in alarming terms the perdition into which he was dragging society, and the ruin that impended unless his “furious rage” should be checked. The edict reached its climax in the startling affirmation that “this man was not a man, but Satan himself under the form of a man, and dressed in a monk’s frock.” ¹² So spake Charles the Fifth to the electors, princes, prelates, and people of his Empire. Luther had entered Worms with one sword hanging over his head-the anathema of the Pope; he quits it with two unsheathed against him, for now to the Pope’s excommunication is added the emperor’s ban.

Meanwhile the Reformer was going on his way. It was now the ninth day (May 4th) since he set out from Worms. He had traversed the mountains of the Black Forest. How grateful, after the stirs and grandeurs of Worms, their silent glades, their fir-embowered hamlets, their herds quietly pasturing, the morning shooting its silvery shafts through the tall trees, and the evening with its shadows descending from the golden west!

The pines were getting fewer, the hills were sinking into the plain; our traveller was nearing Eisenach; he was now on ground familiar to him from boyhood. At this point of the journey, Schurf, Jonas, and Sauven left him and went on to Wittemberg, taking the high road that leads eastward over the plain by Elgurt. Amsdorff alone remained with him. The doctor and his companion struck northward to the town of Mora to visit his grandmother, who still survived. He passed the next day in the refreshing quiet of this little place. The following morning he resumed his journey, and had

¹¹Pallavicino, lib. 1, cap. 28, p. 117. Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 42, p. 158.

¹²Nicht ein Mensch, sondern als der böse Feind in Gestalt eines Menschen mit angenommener Monchskutten.”-Luth. Opp. (L) 17:598.

reached a lonely spot near the Castle of Altenstein, when a troop of horsemen, wearing masks and completely armed, rushed suddenly upon him. The wagon in which he sat was stopped, the waggoner thrown to the ground, and while one of the masks laid firm hold of Amsdorff, another pulling Luther hastily out of the car, raised him to the saddle, and grasping his horse's bridle-rein, plunged quickly with him into the forest of Thuringia. All day long the troop of horsemen wandered hither and thither in the wood, their purpose being to defy pursuit. When night fell they began to ascend a mountain, and a little before midnight they came under the walls of a castle that crowned its summit. ¹³ The drawbridge was let down, the portcullis raised, and the cavalcade passing in, the troopers dismounted in the rocky court of the castle. The captive was led up a single flight of steps, and ushered into an apartment, where he was told he must make a sojourn of unknown length, and during it must lay aside his ecclesiastical dress, attire himself in the costume of a knight, which lay ready to his hand, and be known only by the name of Knight George. [348]

When morning broke, and Luther looked from the casement of his apartment, he saw at a glance where he was. Beneath him were the forest glades, the hamlets, and all the well-known scenes that adjoin Eisenach; although the town itself was not in view. Farther away were the plains around Mora, and bounding these was the vast circle of the hills that sweep along on the horizon. ¹⁴ He could not but know that he was in the Castle of the Wartburg, and in friendly keeping.

Thus suddenly the man on whom all eyes were fixed was carried off, as if by a whirlwind, no one knew whither; nor could any one in all Germany, save his captors, tell whether he was now dead or alive. The Pope had launched his bolt, the emperor had raised his mailed hand to strike, on every side destruction seemed to await the Reformer; at that moment Luther becomes invisible. The Papal [349]

¹³Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 44, p. 159. L. Epp., 2:3.

¹⁴The author has surveyed the scene from the same window, and he describes it as he saw it, and as it must have been daily seen by Luther. The hill of the Wartburg is a steep and wooded slope on all sides, save that on which the window of Luther's chamber is placed. On this side a bare steep runs sheer down to almost the foot of the mountain.

thunder rolls harmlessly along the sky-the emperor's sword cleaves only the yielding air.

Strangely have the scenes been shifted, and the stage has become suddenly dark. But a moment ago the 'theater was crowded with great actors, emperors, princes, ecclesiastical dignitaries, and ambassadors. Powerful interests were in conflict, and mighty issues were about to be decided. The thunder of a fearful ban had just pealed forth, the sword of the emperor had left its scabbard, matters were hurrying to a crisis, and the crash of some terrible catastrophe seemed to be impending. All at once the action is arrested, the brilliant throng vanishes, a deep silence succeeds the tumult and noise, and we have time to meditate on what we have seen, to revolve its lessons, and to feel in our hearts the presence and the hand of that Great Ruler who "sits King upon the floods."

**Book 7: Protestantism in England, from the [350]
Times of Wicliffe to those of Henry VIII.**

Chapter 1: The First Protestant Martyrs in England

Two Sources of Protestantism—The Bible and the Holy Spirit—Wicliffe’s Missionaries—Hopes of the Protestants—Petition Parliament for a Reformation—England not yet ripe—The Movement Thrown Back—Richard II. Persecutes the Lollards—Richard Loses his Throne—Henry IV. Succeeds—Statute De Haeretico Comburendo—William Sawtre—the First Martyr for Protestantism in England—Trial and Execution of John Badby—Conversation between the Prince of Wales and the Martyr at the Stake—Offered his Life—Refuses and Dies

Picture: Waterspout on Luthers House at Eisenach

Picture: Interior of the Wartburg

Picture: Conference between Thorpe and Arundel

The Protestant movement, which, after flowing during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries within narrow channels, began in the sixteenth to expand and to fill a wider area, had two sources. The first, which was in heaven, was the Holy Spirit; the second, which was on the earth, was the Bible. For ages the action of both agencies on human society had been suspended. The Holy Spirit was withheld and the Bible was hidden. Hence the monstrous errors that deformed the Church, and hence all the frightful evils that afflicted the world.

At length a new era had opened. That sovereign, beneficent, and eternal Spirit, who acts when and where and how He will, began again to make His presence felt in the world which He had made; He descended to erect a Temple in which He might dwell with men upon the earth. The Omnipotent and Blessed One put forth His creative power through the instrumentality which He Himself had prepared, even the Scriptures of Truth, which He inspired holy men to write. The recovery of the Holy Scriptures and their diffusion over Christendom was the one instrumentality, as the Spirit who

dwells in and operates through the Scriptures was the one Author, of that great movement which was now renewing the world. On this supposition only—that this great movement was not originated by human forces, but created by a Divine agent—can we account for the fact that in all the countries of Christendom it appeared at the same moment, took the same form, and was followed by the same blessed fruits—virtue in private life and order in public.

We left Luther in the Wartburg. At a moment of great peril, Providence opened for him an asylum; not there to live idly, but to do a work essential to the future progress of Protestantism. While Luther is toiling out of sight, let us look around and note the progress of Protestantism in the other countries of Christendom. We return to England, the parent land of the movement, briefly to chronicle events during the century and a half which divides the era of Wicliffe from that of Luther.

Wicliffe was dead (1384), and now it was seen what a hold he had taken of England, and how widely his doctrine had spread. His disciples, styled sometimes Wicliffites, sometimes Lollards, travelled the kingdom preaching the Gospel. In the Act of Richard II. (1382), which the clergy, practising upon the youth of the king, got passed without the knowledge of the Commons, mention is made of a great number of persons “going about from country to country, and from town to town, in frieze gowns, without the licence of the ordinaries, and preaching, not only in churches and churchyards, but in market-places and at fairs, divers sermons containing heresies and notorious errors, to the blemishing of the Christian faith, the estate of holy Church, and the great peril of souls.”¹ Wicliffe was yet alive, and these men “in frieze gowns,” which the Act empowered the bishops to seize and confine in their houses and prisons, were the missionaries of the great Reformer. These preachers were not troubled with doubts touching their right to assume the sacred office. They reasoned that the same charter which gave to the Church her right to exist, gave to her members the right to discharge those functions that are needful to her welfare. They went not to Rome, therefore, but to the Bible for their warrant to minister.

Their countrymen flocked to their sermons. The soldiers mingled [351]

¹Fox, pp. 229, 230; Lond. 1838.

with the civilians, sword in hand, ready to defend the preacher should violence be offered to him. Several of the nobility joined their party, and were not ashamed to confess themselves the disciples of the Gospel. There followed, wherever their doctrine was received, a reformation of manners, and in some places a purging of the public worship by the removal of idolatrous symbols.

These signs promised much; in the eyes of the Wicliffites they promised everything. They believed that England was ready to throw off the yoke of Rome, and in this belief they resolved on striking a vigorous blow at the reigning superstition. Within ten years of the death of Wicliffe (1395) they petitioned Parliament for a reformation in religion, accompanying their petition with twelve “conclusions,” or grounds,² for such a reformation; of which the second, which we give as a sample of the style and spirit of the whole, was as follows: - “That our usual priesthood, which took its original at Rome, and is feigned to be a power higher than angels, is not that priesthood which Christ ordained unto His disciples. This conclusion is thus proved: forasmuch as this priesthood is done with signs, and Pontifical rites, and ceremonies, and benedictions of no force and effect, neither having any ground in Scripture, forasmuch as the bishops ordinal and the New Testament do nothing at all agree: neither do we see that the Holy Ghost doth give any good gift through any such signs or ceremonies, because that He, together with noble and good gifts, cannot consist and be in any person with deadly sin. The corollary or effect of this conclusion is that it is a lamentable and dolorous mockery unto wise men to see the bishops mock and play with the Holy Ghost in the giving of their orders, because they give (shaven) crowns for their characters, and marks instead of white hearts, and this character is the mark of Antichrist, brought into the holy Church, to cloke and cover their idleness.” These conclusions they also posted

²These included the condemnation of transubstantiation; exorcisms; the blessing of bread, oil, wax, water, etc.; the union of spiritual and temporal offices; clerical celibacy; prayers for the dead; the worship of saints and images; pilgrimages; auricular confession; indulgences; conventual vows, etc. etc. (Collier, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 1, pp. 597, 598; Lond., 1708.)

up on the walls of Westminster, and suspended on the gates of St. Paul's.³

England was not yet prepared for such "plainness of speech." The great mass of the nation, without instruction, awed by tradition, and ruled over by the hierarchy, was inert and hostile. The Wicliffites forgot, too, when they went to Parliament, that Reformations are not made, they must grow. They cannot be evoked by royal proclamations, or by Parliamentary edicts; they must be planted by the patient labor of evangelists, and watered not unfrequently by the blood of martyrs. Of all harvests that of truth is the slowest to ripen, although the most plentiful and precious when it has come to full maturity. These were lessons which these early disciples had yet to learn.

The bold step of the Wicliffites threw back the movement, or we ought rather to say, made it strike its roots downward in the nation's heart. The priests took the alarm. Arundel, Archbishop of York, posted with all speed to Ireland, where Richard II. then was, and implored him to return and arrest the movement, which was growing to a head. His pious wife, Anne of Luxemburg, a disciple of Wicliffe, was dead (1394), and the king readily complied with Arundel's request. He forbade the Parliament to proceed in the matter of the Lollard petition, and summoning the chief authors of the "conclusions" before him, he threatened them with death should they continue to defend their opinions.⁴ But Richard II. did not long retain a scepter which he had begun to wield against the Lollards. Insurrection broke out in his kingdom; he was deposed, and thrown into the Castle of Pontefract. There are but few steps between the prisons and the graves of princes. Richard perished miserably by starvation, and was succeeded by Henry IV., son of that Duke of Lancaster who had been the friend of Wicliffe.

The cause which the father had defended in the person of its great apostle, found no favor in the eyes of the son. Henry had mounted the throne by Arundel's help, and he must needs repay the service by devotion to the Church of which Arundel was one of the main pillars. To consolidate his power, the son of John of Gaunt sacrificed

³Walsingham, *Hist. Anglae*, p. 328; *Camdeni Anglica*, Frankfort, 1603. Lewis, *Wiclif*, p. 337. Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, bk. 1, p. 662; Lond., 1641.

⁴Fox, bk. 1, p. 664.

the Wicliffites. In his reign was passed a law adjudging men to death for religion - the first of the sort to stain the Statute-book. It enacted that all incorrigible heretics should be burned alive.

The preamble of the Act sets forth that “divers false and perverse people of a certain new sect of the faith of the Sacraments, damnably thinking, and against the law of God and the Church, usurping the office of preaching,” were going from diocese to diocese, holding conventicles, opening schools, writing books, and wickedly teaching the people.

[352] To remedy this, the diocesan was empowered to arrest all persons suspected of heresy, confine them in his strong prison, bring them to trial, and if on conviction they refused to abjure, they were to be delivered to the sheriff of the county or the mayor of the town, who were “before the people, in a high place, them to do to be burnt.” Such was the statute *DeHoeretico Comburendo*, of which Sir Edward Coke remarks that it appears that the bishops are the proper judges of heresy, and that the business of the sheriff was only ministerial to the sentence of the spiritual court. ⁵ “King Henry IV.,” say’s Fox, “was the first of all English Kings that began the unmerciful burning of Christ’s saints for standing against the Pope.”
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⁵Instit., pax. 3, cap. 5, fol. 39. Collier, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol 1, pp. 614, 615.

⁶Fox, bk. 1, p. 675. This statute is known as 2 Henry IV., cap. 15. Cotton remarks “that the printed statute differs greatly from the record, not only in form, but much more in matter, in order to maintain ecclesiastical tyranny.” His publisher, Prynne, has this note upon it: “This was the first statute and butcherly knife that the impeaching prelates procured or had against the poor preachers of Christ’s Gospel.” (Cobbett., *Parliament. Hist.*, vol. 1, p. 287; Lond., 1806.) The “Statute of Heresy” was passed in the previous reign-Richard II., 1382. It is entitled “An Act to commission sheriffs to apprehend preachers of heresy, and their abettors, reciting the enormities ensuing the preaching of heretics.” It was surreptitiously obtained by the clergy and enrolled without the consent of the Commons. On the complaint of that body this Act was repealed, but by a second artifice of the priests the Act of repeal was suppressed, and prosecutions carried on in virtue of the “Act of Heresy.” (See Cobbett, *Parliament. Hist.*, vol. 1, p. 177.) Sir Edward Coke (*Instit.*, par. 3, cap. 5, fol. 39) gives the same account of the matter. He says that the 6th of Richard II., which repealed the statute of the previous year (5th Richard II.), was not proclaimed, thus leaving the latter in force. Collier (*Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 1, p. 606) argues against this view of the case. The manner of proclaiming laws, printing being then unknown, was to send a copy on parchment, in Latin or French, to each sheriff, who proclaimed them in his county; and had the 6th of Richard II., which repealed the 1048

The law was not permitted to remain a dead letter. William Sawtrey, formerly Rector of St. Margaret's in Lynn, and now of St. Osyth in London—"a good man and faithful priest," says Fox—was apprehended, and an indictment preferred against him. Among the charges contained in it we find the following: - "That he will not worship the cross on which Christ suffered, but only Christ who suffered upon the cross." "That after pronouncing the Sacramental words of the body of Christ, the bread remaineth of the same nature that it was before, neither doth it cease to be bread." He was condemned as a heretic by the archbishop's court, and delivered to the secular power to be burned.⁷

Sawtrey being the first Protestant to be put to death in England, the ceremony of his degradation was gone about with great formality. First the paten and chalice were taken out of his hands; next the chasuble was pulled off his back, to signify that now he had been completely stripped of all his functions and dignities as a priest. Next the New Testament and the stole were taken away, to intimate his deposition from the order of deacon, and the withdrawal of his power to teach. His deposition as subdeacon was effected by stripping him of the alb. The candlestick and taper were next taken from him to "put from thee all order of an acolyte." He was next deprived of the holy water book, and with it he was bereft of all power as an exorcist.⁸ By these and sundry other ceremonies, too tedious to recite, William Sawtrey was made as truly a layman as before the oil and scissors of the Church had touched him.

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Unrobed, disqualified for the mystic ministry, and debarred the sacrificial shrines of Rome, he was now to ascend the steps of an altar, whereon he was to lay costlier sacrifice than any to be seen in the Roman temples. That altar was the stake, that sacrifice was himself. He died in the flames, February 12, 1401. As England had the high honour of sending forth the first Reformer, England had likewise the honour, in William Sawtrey, of giving the first martyr to Protestantism.⁹

previous Act, been omitted in the proclamation, it would, Collier thinks, have been known to the Commons.

⁷Fox, bk. 1, p. 675. Collier, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 1, p 618.

⁸Fox, bk. 1, p. 674.

⁹Collier, *Eccles. Hist.*, 1, 618. Burnet, *Hist. Ref.*, 1:24.

His martyrdom was a virtual prophecy. To Protestantism it was a sure pledge of victory, and to Rome a terrible prognostic of defeat! Protestantism had now made the soil of England its own by burying its martyred dead in it. Henceforward it will feel that, like the hero of classic story, it stands on its native earth, and is altogether invincible. It may struggle and bleed and endure many a seeming defeat; the conflict may be prolonged through many a dark year and century, but it must and shall eventually triumph. It has taken a pledge of the soil, and it cannot possibly perish from off it. Its opponent, on the other hand, has written the prophecy of its own defeat in the blood it has shed, and struggle as it may it shall not prevail over its rival, but shall surely fall before it. ¹⁰

The names of many of these early sufferers, to whom England owes, under Providence, its liberties and its Scriptural religion, have fallen into oblivion. Among those whom the diligence of our ancient chroniclers has rescued from this fate is that of John Badby. He was a layman of the diocese of Worcester. Arraigned on the doctrine of the Sacrament, he frankly confessed his opinions. In vain, he held, were the “Sacramental words” spoken over the bread on the altar: despite the conjuration it still remained “material bread.” If it was Christ whom the priest produced on the altar, let him be shown Him in his true form, and he would believe. There could be but one fate in reserve for the man who, instead of bowing implicitly to his “mother the Church,” challenged her to attest her prodigy by some proof or sign of its truth. He was convicted before the Bishop of Worcester of “the crime of heresy,” but reserved for final judgment before Arundel, now become the Archbishop of Canterbury. ¹¹

On the 1st of March, 1409, the haughty Arundel, assembling his suffragans, with quite a crowd of temporal and spiritual lords, sat down on the judgment-seat in St. Paul’s, and commanded the humble confessor to be brought before him. He hoped, perhaps, that Badby would be awed by this display of authority. In this, however,

¹⁰There is some ground to think that Sawtre was not the first to be put to death for religion in England. “A chronicle of London,” says the writer of the Preface to Bale’s *Brefe Chronycle*, “mentions one of the Albigenses burned A.D. 1210.” And Camden, it is thought, alludes to this when he says: “In the reign of John, Christians began to be put to death in the flames by Christians amongst us.” (Bale, Preface 2)

¹¹Fox, bk. 5, p. 266.

he was mistaken. The opinions he had avowed before the Bishop of Worcester, he maintained with equal courage in presence of the more august tribunal of the primate, and the more imposing assemblage now convened in St. Paul's. The prisoner was remanded till the 15th of the same month, being consigned meanwhile to the convent of the Preaching Friars, the archbishop himself keeping the key of his cell, ¹²

When the day for the final sentence, the 15th of March, came, Arundel again ascended his episcopal throne, attended by a yet more brilliant escort of lords spiritual and temporal, including a prince of the blood. John Badby had but the same answer to give, the same confession to make, on his second as on his first appearance. Bread consecrated by the priest was still bread, and the Sacrament of the altar was of less estimation than the humblest man there present. ¹³ This rational reply was too rational for the men and the times. To them it appeared simple blasphemy. The archbishop, seeing "his countenance stout and his heart confirmed," pronounced John Badby "an open and public heretic," and the court "delivered him to the secular power, and desired the temporal lords then and there present, that they would not put him to death for that his offense," as if they had been innocent of all knowledge that that same secular power to which they now delivered him had, at their instigation, passed a law adjudging all heretics to the fire, and that the magistrate was bound under excommunication to carry out the statute *De Haeritico Comburendo*.

A few hours only elapsed till the fire was lighted. Sentence was passed upon him in the forenoon: on the afternoon of the same day, the king's writ, ordering the execution, arrived. Badby was hurried to Smithfield, "and there," says Fox, "being put in an empty barrel, he was bound with iron chains fastened to a stake, having dry wood put about him." As he was standing in the barrel, Prince Henry, the king's eldest son, appeared at the outskirts of the crowd. Touched with pity for the man whom he saw in this dreadful position, he drew near and began to address him, exhorting him to forsake these "dangerous labyrinths of opinion" and save his life. The prince

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¹²Ibid. p. 267.

¹³Collier. *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. 1, p. 629. Fox, bk. 5, p. 266.

and the man in the barrel were conversing together when the crowd opened and the procession of the Sacrament, with twelve torches burning before it, passed in and halted at the stake. The Prior of St. Bartholomew, coming forward, requested Badby to speak his last
[355] word. The slightest act of homage to the Host, once more presented
[356] before him, would loose his chain and set him free. But no! amid the faggots that were to consume him, as before the assembled grandees in St. Paul's, the martyr had but the same confession to make: "it was hallowed bread, not God's body." The priests withdrew, the line of their retreat through the dense crowd being marked by their blazing torches, and the Host borne aloft underneath a silken canopy. The torch was now brought. Soon the sharp flames began to prey upon the limbs of the martyr. A quick cry escaped him in his agony, "Mercy, mercy!" But his prayer was addressed to God, not to his persecutors. The prince, who still lingered near the scene of the tragedy, was recalled by this wail from the stake. He commanded the officers to extinguish the fires. The executioners obeyed. Addressing the half-scorched man, he said that if he would recant his errors and return to the bosom of the Church, he would not only save him from the fire, but would give him a yearly stipend all the days of his life.¹⁴ It was kindly meant, no doubt, on the part of the prince, who commiserated the torments but could not comprehend the joys of the martyr. Turn back now, when he saw the gates opening to receive him, the crown ready to be placed upon his head? No! not for all the gold of England. He was that night to sup with a greater Prince. "Thus," says Fox, "did this valiant champion of Christ, neglecting the prince's fair words... not without a great and most cruel battle, but with much greater triumph of victory... perfect his testimony and martyrdom in the fire."¹⁵

¹⁴Walsingham, *Hist. Angliae*, p. 570; *Camdeni Anglica*, Frankfort, 1603. Holinshed, *Chronicles*, vol. 3, pp. 48, 49; Lond., 1808. Holinshed says the prince "promised him not only life, but also three pence a day so long as he lived, to be paid out of the king's coffers." Cobbett, in his *Parliamentary History*, tells us that the wages of a thresher were at that time twopence per day.

¹⁵Fox, bk. 5, pp. 266, 267; Lond., 1838.

Chapter 2: The Theology of the Early English Protestants

Protestant Preachers and Martyrs before Henry VIII.'s time—Their Theology—Inferior to that of the Sixteenth Century—The Central Truths clearly Seen—William Thorpe—Imprisoned—Dialogue between him and Archbishop Arundel—His Belief—His Views on the Sacrament—The Authority of Scripture—Is Threatened with a Stake—Christ Present in the Sacrament to Faith—Thorpe's Views on Image-Worship—Pilgrimage—Confession—Refuses to Submit—His Fate Unknown—Simplicity of Early English Theology—Convocation at Oxford to Arrest the Spread of Protestantism—Constitutions of Arundel—The Translation and Reading of the Scriptures Forbidden

Picture: Old St. Pauls and Neighborhood in 1540

Picture: The Cathedral and Leaning Tower of Pisa

This violence did not terrify the disciples of the truth. The stakes they had seen planted in Smithfield, and the edict of “burning” now engrossed on the Statute-book, taught them that the task of winning England would not be the easy one which they had dreamed; but this conviction neither shook their courage nor abated their zeal. A cause that had found martyrs had power enough, they believed, to overcome any force on earth, and would one day convert, not England only, but the world. In that hope they went on propagating their opinions, and not without success, for, says Fox, “I find in registers recorded, that these foresaid persons, whom the king and the Catholic Fathers did so greatly detest for heretics, were in divers counties of this realm increased, especially at London, in Lincolnshire, in Norfolk, in Hertfordshire, in Shrewsbury, in Calais, and other quarters.”¹ Wicliffe was but newly laid in his grave; Huss had not yet begun his career in Bohemia; in France, in Germany, and the other countries of Christendom, all was dark; but in England

¹Fox, bk. 5, p. 268.

the day had broken, and its light was spreading. The Reformation had confessors and martyrs within the metropolis; it had disciples in many of the shires; it had even crossed the sea, and obtained some footing in Calais, then under the English crown: and all this a century wellnigh before Henry VIII., whom Romish writers have credited as the author of the movement, was born.

[357] William Thorpe, in the words of the chronicler, “was a valiant warrior under the triumphant banner of Christ.” His examination before Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, shows us the evangelical creed as it was professed by the English Christians of the fifteenth century. Its few and simple articles led very directly to the grand center of truth, which is Christ. Standing before him, these early disciples were in the Light. Many things, as yet, they saw but dimly; it was only the early morning; the full day was at a distance: those great lights which God had ordained to illuminate the skies of His Church in the following century, had not yet arisen: the mists and shadows of a night, not yet wholly chased away, lay dense on many parts of the field of revelation; but one part of it was, in their eyes, bathed in light; this was the center of the field, whereon stands the cross, with the great Sacrifice lifted up upon it, the one object of faith, the everlasting Rock of the sinner’s hope. To this they clung, and whatever tended to shake their faith in it, or to put something else in its room, they instinctively rejected. They knew the voice of the Shepherd, and a stranger they would not follow.

Imprisoned in the Castle of Saltwood (1407), Thorpe was brought before the primate, Arundel, for examination. The record of what passed between him and the archbishop is from the pen of Thorpe. He found Arundel in “a great chamber,” with a numerous circle around him; but the instant the archbishop perceived him, he withdrew into a closet, attended by only two or three clerics.

Arundel: “William, I know well that thou hast this twenty winters or more traveled in the north country, and in divers other countries of England, sowing false doctrine, laboring, with undue teaching, to infect and poison all this land.”

Thorpe: “Sir, since ye deem me a heretic, and out of the faith, will you give me, here, audience to tell you my belief?”

Arundel: “Yea, tell on.”

Hereupon the prisoner proceeded to declare his belief in the Trinity; in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the God-head; and in the events of our Lord's life, as these are recorded by the four Evangelists: continuing thus -

Thorpe: "When Christ would make an end here of this temporal life, I believe that in the next day before He was to suffer passion He ordained the Sacrament of His flesh and His blood, in form of bread and wine-that is, His own precious body-and gave it to His apostles to eat; commanding them, and, by them all their after-comers, that they should do it in this form that He showed to them, use themselves, and teach and administer to other men and women, this most worshipful and holiest sacrament, in remembrance of His holiest living, and of this most true preaching, and of His willing and patient suffering of the most painful passion."

"And I believe that, this Christ, our Savior, after that He had ordained this most worthy Sacrament of His own precious body, went forth willingly... and as He would, and when He would, he died willingly for man's sake upon the cross."

"And I believe in holy Church-that is, all they that have been, and that now are, and that to the end of the world shall be, a people that shall endeavor to know and keep the commandments of God."

"I believe that the gathering together of this people, living now here in this life, is the holy Church of God, fighting here on earth against the devil, the prosperity of the world, and their own lusts. I submit myself to this holy Church of Christ, to be ever ready and obedient to the ordinance of it, and of every member thereof, after my knowledge and power, by the help of God."

The prisoner next confessed his faith in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, "as the council of the Three Persons of the Trinity," that they were sufficient for man's salvation, and that he was resolved to guide himself by their light, and willing to submit to their authority, and also to that of the "saints and doctors of Christ," so far as their teaching agreed with the Word of God.

Arundel: "I require that thou wilt swear to me that thou wilt forsake all the opinions which the sect of the Lollards hold." Further, the archbishop required him to inform upon his brethren, and cease from preaching till he should come to be of a better mind. On hearing this the prisoner stood for awhile silent.

Arundel: "Answer, one way or the other."

Thorpe: "Sir, if I should do as you require, full many men and women would (as they might full truly) say that I had falsely and cowardly forsaken the truth, and slandered shamefully the Word of God."

The archbishop could only say that if he persisted in this obstinacy he must tread the same road that Sawtre had gone. This pointed to a stake in Smithfield.

Hereupon the confessor was again silent. "In my heart," says he, "I prayed the Lord God to comfort me and strengthen me; and to give me then and always grace to speak with a meek and quiet spirit; and whatever I should speak, that I might have authorities of the Scriptures or open reason for it."

[358] A clerk: "What thing musest thou? Do as my lord hath commanded thee." Still the confessor spoke not.

Arundel: "Art thou not yet determined whether thou wilt do as I have said to thee? "

Thorpe humbly assured the primate that the knowledge which he taught to others he had learned at the feet of the wisest, the most learned, and the holiest priests he could hear of in England.

Arundel: "Who are these holy and wise men of whom thou hast taken thine information? "

Thorpe: "Master John Wicliffe. He was held by many men the greatest clerk that they knew then living: great men communed often with him. This learning of Master John Wicliffe is yet held by many men and women the learning most in accordance with the living and teaching of Christ and His apostles, and most openly showing how the Church of Christ has been, and yet should be, ruled and governed."

Arundel: "That learning which thou callest truth and soothfastness is open slander to holy Church; for though Wicliffe was a great clerk, yet his doctrine is not approved of by holy Church, but many sentences of his learning are damned, as they well deserve. Wilt thou submit thee to me or no?"

Thorpe: "I dare not, for fear of God, submit me to thee."

Arundel, angrily to one of his clerks: "Fetch hither quickly the certificate that came to me from Shrewsbury, under the bailiff's seal,

witnessing the errors and heresies which this fellow hath venomously sown there.”

The clerk delivered to the archbishop a roll, from which the primate read as follows:—“The third Sunday after Easter, the year of our Lord 1407, William Thorpe came unto the town of Shrewsbury, and through leave granted unto him to preach, he said openly, in St. Chad’s Church, in his sermon, that the Sacrament of the altar, after the consecration, was material bread; and that images should in nowise be worshipped; and that men should not go on pilgrimages; and that priests have no title to tithes; and that it is not lawful to swear in anywise.”

Arundel, rolling up the paper: “Lo, here it is certified that thou didst teach that the Sacrament of the altar was material bread after the consecration. What sayest thou?”

Thorpe: “As I stood there in the pulpit, busying me to teach the commandment of God, a sacred bell began ringing, and therefore many people turned away hastily, and with noise ran towards it; and I, seeing this, said to them thus: ‘Good men, ye were better to stand here still, and to hear God’s Word. For the virtue of the most holy Sacrament of the altar stands much more in the faith that you ought to have in your soul, than in the outward sight of it, and therefore ye were better to stand still quietly to hear God’s Word, because that through the hearing of it men come to true belief.’”

Arundel: “How teachest thou men to believe in this Sacrament?”

Thorpe: “Sir, as I believe myself, so I teach other men.”

Arundel: “Tell out plainly thy belief thereof.”

Thorpe: “Sir, I believe that the night before Jesus-Christ suffered for mankind, He took bread in His holy hands, lifting up His eyes, and giving thanks to God His Father, blessed this bread and brake it, and gave it unto His disciples, saying to them, ‘Take and eat of this, all you; this is My body.’ I believe, and teach other men to believe, that the holy Sacrament of the altar is the Sacrament of Christ’s flesh and blood in the form of bread and wine.”

Arundel: “Well, well, thou shalt say otherwise before I leave thee; but what say you to the second point, that images ought not to be worshipped in anywise?”

Thorpe repudiated the practice as not only without warrant in Scripture, but as plainly forbidden in the Word of God. There

followed a long contention between him and the archbishop, Arundel maintaining that it was good to worship images on the ground that reverence was due to those whom they represented, that they were aids in devotion, and that they possessed a secret virtue that showed itself at times in the working of miracles.

The prisoner intimated that he had no belief in these miracles; that he knew the Word of God to be true; that he held, in common with the early doctors of the Church, Augustine, Ambrose, and Chrysostom, that its teaching was in nowise doubtful on the point in question, that it expressly forbade the making of images, and the bowing down to them, and held those who did so as guilty of the sin and liable to the doom of idolaters. The archbishop found that the day was wearing, and passed from the argument to the next point.

Arundel: "What sayest thou to the third point that is certified against thee, that pilgrimage is not lawful?"

Thorpe: "There are true pilgrimages, and lawful, and acceptable to God."

Arundel: "Whom callest thou true pilgrims?"

[359] Thorpe: "Those travelling towards the bliss of heaven. Such busy themselves to know and keep the biddings of God; flee the seven deadly sins; do willingly all the works of mercy, and seek the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Every good thought they think, every virtuous word they speak, every fruitful work they accomplish, is a step numbered of God toward Him into heaven.

"But," continued the confessor, "the most part of men and women that now go on pilgrimages have not these conditions, nor love to have them. For, as I well know, since I have full often tried, examine whoever will twenty of these pilgrims, and he shall not find three men or women that know surely a commandment of God, nor can say their Paternosters and Ave Maria, nor their creed, readily, in any manner of language. Their pilgrimage is more to have here worldly and fleshly friendship, than to have friendship of God and of His saints in heaven. Also, sir, I know that when several men and women go thus after their own wills, and fixing on the same pilgrimage, they will arrange beforehand to have with them both men and women that can sing wanton songs, and other pilgrims will have with them bagpipes; so that every town that they come through, what with the noise of their singing, and with the sound of their piping, and with

the tangling of their Canterbury bells, and with the barking of dogs after them, they make more noise than if the king came there with all his clarions and minstrels.”

Arundel: “What! janglest thou against men’s devotion? Whatever thou or such other say, I say that the pilgrimage that now is used is to them that do it a praiseworthy and a good means to come to grace.”

After this there ensued another long contention between Thorpe and the primate, on the subject of confession. The archbishop was not making much way in the argument, when one of the clerks interposed and put an end to it.

“Sir,” said he, addressing the primate, “it is late in the day, and ye have far to ride to-night; therefore make an end with him, for he will make none; but the more, sir, that ye busy you to draw him toward you, the more contumacious he is made.”

“William, kneel down,” said another, “and pray my Lord’s Grace, and leave all thy fancies, and become a child of holy Church.” The archbishop, striking the table fiercely with his hand, also demanded his instant submission. Others taunted him with his eagerness to be promoted to a stake which men more learned than he had prudently avoided by recanting their errors.

“Sir,” said he, replying to the archbishop, “as I have said to you several times to-day, I will willingly and humbly obey and submit to God, and to His law, and to every member of holy Church, as far as I can perceive that these members accord with their Head, Christ, and will teach me, rule me, or chastise me by authority, especially of God’s law.”

This was a submission; but the additions with which it was qualified robbed it of all grace in the eyes of the archbishop. Once more, and for the last time, the primate put it plainly thus: “Wilt thou not submit thee to the ordinance of holy Church?”

“I will full gladly submit me,” replied Thorpe, “as I showed you before.”²

²This account of Thorpe’s examination is from Fox greatly abridged. Our aim has been to bring out his doctrinal views, seeing they may be accepted as a good general representation of the Lollard theology of his day. The threats and contumelious epithets addressed to him by the primate, we have all but entirely suppressed.

Hereupon Thorpe was delivered to the constable of the castle. He was led out and thrown into a worse prison than that in which he had before been confined. At his prison-door we lose all trace of him. He never again appears, and what his fate was has never been ascertained.³

This examination, or rather conference between the primate and Thorpe, enables us to form a tolerable idea of English Protestantism, or Lollardism, in the twilight time that intervened between its dawn, in the days of Wicliffe, and its brighter rising in the times of the sixteenth century. It consisted, we may say, of but three facts or truths. The first was Scripture, as the supreme and infallible authority; the second was the Cross, as the sole fountain of forgiveness and salvation; and the third was Faith, as the one instrumentality by which men come into possession of the blessings of that salvation. We may add a fourth, which was not so much a primary truth as a consequence from the three doctrines which formed the skeleton, or frame-work, of the Protestantism of those days - Holiness. The faith of these Christians was not a dead faith: it was a faith that kept the commandments of God, a faith that purified the heart, and enriched the life.

If, in one sense, Lollard Protestantism was a narrow and limited system, consisting but of a very few facts, in another sense it was perfect, inasmuch as it contained the germ and promise of all theology. Given but one fundamental truth, all must follow in due time.

[360] In the authority of Scripture as the inspired Word of God, and the death of Christ as a complete and perfect atonement for human guilt, they had found more than one fundamental truth. They had but to go forward in the path on which they had entered, guiding themselves by these two lights, and they would come, in due time, into possession of all revealed truth. At every step the horizon around them would grow wider, the light falling upon the objects it embraced would grow continually clearer, the relations of truth to truth would be more easily traceable, till at last the whole would grow into a complete and harmonious system, truth linked to truth, and all ranging themselves

³There were clearly but two courses open to him—retractation or condemnation. We agree with Fox in thinking that he was not likely to retract.

in beautiful order around the grand central truths of the religion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Meanwhile these early English Christians were beset without by scrupulosities and prejudices, arising from the dimness and narrowness of their vision. They feared to lay their hand on the New Testament and be sworn; they scrupled to employ instrumental music in public worship; and some of them condemned all war. But within what a vast enlargement had they already experienced! Bowing to the authority of the Word of God, their understandings were emancipated from the usurped authority of man. Having this anointing, they refused to look with the eyes of others, and see on the inspired page doctrines which no rule of exegesis could discover there, and from which their reason revolted as monstrous. In leaning on the Cross, they had found that relief of heart which so many of their countrymen were seeking, but not finding, in fasts, in penances, in offerings to the saints, and in pilgrimages, performed sometimes in sackcloth and tears, and severe mortification of the flesh, and sometimes in gay apparel, and on soft-paced and richly-caparisoned mules, to the screaming of bagpipes and the music of merry songs.

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The best evidence of the continued spread of Lollardism—in other words, of Protestantism—is the necessity under which its opponents evidently felt to adopt more vigorous measures for its repression. The “well” which Wicliffe had digged at Oxford was still flowing; its waters must be stopped. The light he had kindled in his vernacular Bible was still burning, and sending its rays over England; it must be extinguished. The accomplishment of these two objects became now the main labor of Arundel. Convening at Oxford (1408) the bishops and clergy of his province, he promulgated certain provisions for the checking of heresy, digested into thirteen chapters, and known as the Constitutions of Arundel,⁴ a designation they are entitled to bear, seeing they all run under the authority of the archbishop. The drift of these Constitutions was, first, to prohibit all from exercising the function of preacher who had not a special licence from the diocesan, or had not undergone an examination before him touching their orthodoxy; secondly, to charge preachers to eschew all Wicliffite novelties, and to frame their discourses in every respect according

⁴Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 625.

[362] to the doctrine of holy Church; and thirdly, seeing “the errors of the Lollards have seized the University of Oxford, therefore, to prevent the fountain being poisoned, ‘tis decreed by the Synod that every warden, master, or principal of any college or hall shall be obliged to inquire, at least every month, into the opinions and principles of the students in their respective houses, and if they find them maintain anything repugnant to the Catholic faith, to admonish them; and if they continue obstinate, to expel them.” “In regard that,” said the sixth Constitution, “the new roads in religion are more dangerous to travel than the old ones,” the primate, careful for the safety of wayfarers, proceeded to shut up all the new roads thus: “we enjoin and require that no book or tract, written by John Wicliffe, or any other person either in Wicliffe’s time or since, or who for the future shall write any other book upon a subject in divinity, shall be suffered to be read either in schools, halls, or any other places within our Province of Canterbury, unless such books shall first be examined by the University of Oxford or Cambridge,” etc. The infraction of this enactment subjected the offender to prosecution, “as one that makes it his business to spread the infection of schism and heresy.”⁵

The seventh Constitution began thus: “‘Tis a dangerous undertaking, as St. Jerome assures us, to translate the Holy Scriptures. We therefore decree and ordain,” it continued, “that from henceforward no unauthorised person shall translate any part of Holy Scripture into English, or any other language, under any form of book or treatise. Neither shall any such book, treatise, or version, made either in Wicliffe’s time or since, be read, either in whole or in part, publicly or privately, under the penalty of the greater excommunication, till the said translation shall be approved either by the bishop of the diocese or a provincial council, as occasion shall require.”⁶

No such authorization was ever given. Consequently all translations of the Sacred Scriptures into English, or any other tongue, and all reading of the Word of God in whole or in part, in public or in private, were by this Constitution proscribed, under the penalty of the greater excommunication.

⁵Collier, 1, bk. 7, p. 626.

⁶Ibid.

Chapter 3: Growth of English Protestantism

The Papal Schism—Its Providential Purpose—Council of Pisa—Henry’s Letter to the Pope—The King exhorts the Pope to Amendment—The Council of Pisa Deposes both Popes—Elects Alexander V—The Schism not Healed—Protestantism in England continues to grow—Oxford Purged—A Catholic Revival—Aves to Our Lady—Aves to the Archbishop—Persecution of Protestants grows Hotter—Cradle of English Protestantism—Lessons to be Learned beside it

We have already spoken of the schism by which the Papal world was divided, and its governing head weakened, at the very moment when Wicliffe was beginning his Reformation. ¹ To this event, in no small degree, was it owing that the Reformer was permitted to go to his grave in peace, and that the seeds of truth which he had scattered were suffered to spring up and take some hold of the soil before the tempest burst. But if the schism was a shield over the infant reformation, it was a prolific source of calamities to the world. Consciences were troubled, not knowing which of the two chairs of Peter was the indubitable seat of authority and true fountain of grace. The nations were distracted, for the rival Popes had carried their quarrel to the battle-field, and blood was flowing in torrents. To put an end to these scandals and miseries, the French king sent an embassy to Pope Gregory XII., to induce him to fulfill the oath he had taken at his election, to vacate the chair provided his rival could be brought to terms. “He received,” says Collier, “a shuffling answer.” ²

In November, 1409, the Cardinal of Bordeaux arrived in England from France, on the design of engaging the two crowns to employ their authority in compelling Gregory to make good his oath. The cardinals, too, lent their help towards terminating the schism. They

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¹ See ante, bk.2, chap.10.

² Ibid., p.628.

took steps for commencing a General Council at Pisa, to which the English clergy sent three delegates.³ King Henry had previously dispatched ambassadors, who carried, with other instructions, a letter to the Pope from the king. Henry IV. spoke plainly to his “most Holy Father.” He prayed him to “consider to what degree the present schism has embarrassed and embroiled Christendom, and how many thousand lives have been lost in the field in this quarrel.” Would he lay these things to heart, he was sure that “his Holiness” would renounce the tiara sooner than keep it at the expense of creating “division in the Church, and fencing against peace with evasive answers. For,” added he, “were your Holiness influenced by serviceable motives, you would be governed by the tenderness of the true mother, who pleaded before King Solomon, and rather resign the child than suffer it to be cut in pieces.”⁴ He who gives good advice, says the proverb, undertakes a thankless office. The proverb especially holds good in the case of him who presumes to advise an infallible man. Gregory read the letter, but made no sign. Archbishop Arundel, by way of seconding his sovereign, got Convocation to agree that Peter’s pence should be withheld till the breach, which so afflicted Christendom, were healed. If with the one hand the king was castigating the Pope, with the other he was burning the Lollards: what wonder that he sped so ill in his efforts to abate the Papal haughtiness and obstinacy?

Still the woeful sight of two chairs and two Popes continued to afflict the adherents of the Papacy. The cardinals, more earnestly than ever, resolved to bring the matter to an issue between the Pope and the Church; for they foresaw, if matters went on as they were doing, the speedy ruin of both. Accordingly they gave notice to the princes and prelates of the West, that they had summoned a General Council at Pisa, on the 25th of March next ensuing (1409). The call met a universal response. “Almost all the prelates and venerable men of the Latin world,” says Walsingham, “repaired to Pisa.”⁵ The Council consisted of 22 cardinals, 4 patriarchs, 12 archbishops in person and 14 by proxy, 80 bishops in person and a great many by their representatives, 87 abbots, the ambassadors

³Collier, vol. 1, p. 628.

⁴Walsingham, *Hist. Angliae*, p. 569; *Camdeni Anglica*, Frankfort, 1603.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 570.

of nearly all the princes of Europe, the deputies of most of the universities, the representatives of the chapters of cathedral churches, etc. ⁶ The numbers, rank, and authority of the Council well entitled it to represent the Church, and gave good promise of the extinction of the schism.

It was now to be seen how much the Papacy had suffered in prestige by being cleft in twain, and how merciful this dispensation was for the world's deliverance. Had the Papacy continued entire and unbroken, had there been but one Pope, the Council would have bowed down before him as the true Vicar; but there were two; this forced the question upon the members-Which is the false Pope? May not both be false? And so in a few days they found their way to the conclusion which they put into a definite sentence in their fourteenth session, and which, when we take into account the age, the men, and the functionaries over whom their condemnation was suspended, is one of the most remarkable decisions on record. It imprinted a scar on the Papal power which is not effaced to this day. The Council pronounced Gregory XII. and Benedict XIII. "to be notorious and incorrigible schismatics and heretics, and guilty of plain perjury; which imputations being evidently proved, they deprive them both of their titles and authority, pronounce the Apostolic See vacant, and all the censures and promotions of these pretended Popes void and of none effect. ⁷

The Council, having ejected ignominiously the two Popes, and having rescued, as it thought, the chair on which each had laid hold with so tenacious and determined a grasp, proceeded to place in it the Cardinal of Milan, who began to reign under the title of Alexander V. ⁸ This Pontificate was brief, for within the year Alexander came by his end in a manner of which Balthazar, who succeeded him as John XXIII., was supposed to know more than he was willing to disclose. The Council, instead of mending matters, had made them worse. John, who was now acknowledged the legitimate holder of the tiara, contributed nothing either to the honour of the Church or the repose of the world. The two Popes, Gregory and Benedict, refusing to submit themselves to the Council, or to acknowledge

⁶Collier, vol 1, bk. 7, pp. 628, 629.

⁷Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 629. Concil. Lab. at Cossar., tom. 10, pars. 2, col. 2126.

⁸Ibid., col. 2131.

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the new Pope, were still in the field, contending with both spiritual and temporal arms. Instead of two rival Popes there were now three; “not three crowns upon one Pope’s head,” says Fox, “but three heads in one Popish Church,” each with a body of followers to support his pretensions. The schism thus was not only not healed, it was wider than ever; and the scandals and miseries that flowed from it, so far from being abated or extinguished, were greatly aggravated; and a few years later, we find another General Council assembling at Constance, if haply it might effect what that of Pisa had failed to accomplish.⁹

We return to England. While the schism continued to scandalize and vex Romanists on the Continent, the growth of Lollardism was not less a torment to the clergy in England. Despite the rigour of Arundel, who spared neither edicts nor faggots, the seeds which that arch-enemy of the Papacy, Wicliffe, had sown, would ever be springing up, and mingling the wheat of Rome with the tares of heresy. Oxford, especially, demanded the primate’s attention. That fountain had savoured of Lollardism ever since Wicliffe taught there. It must be purified. The archbishop set out, with a pompous retinue, to hold a visitation of the university (1411). The chancellor, followed by a numerous body of proctors, masters, and students, met him at a little distance from the gates, and told him that if he came merely to see the town he was welcome, but if he came in his character of visitor, he begged to remind his Grace that the University of Oxford, in virtue of the Papal bull, was exempt from episcopal and archiepiscopal jurisdiction. This rebuff Arundel could ill bear. He left Oxford in a day or two, and wrote an account of the affair to the king. The heads of the university were sent for to court, and the chancellor and proctors were turned out of their office. The students, taking offense at this rigor, ceased their attendance on the public lectures, and were on the point of breaking up and dissolving their body.

After a warm contention between the university and the archbishop, the matter, by consent of both parties, was referred to the king. Henry decided that the point should remain on the footing

⁹See ante, bk. 3, chap. 4.

on which Richard II. had placed it.¹⁰ Thus judgment was given in favor of the archbishop, and the royal decision was confirmed first by Parliament and next by John XXIII., in a bull that made void the privilege of exemption which Pope Boniface had conferred on the university.¹¹

This opened the door of Oxford to the archbishop. Meanwhile Convocation raised a yet louder cry of Wicliffitism in the university, and pressed the primate to interpose his authority ere that “former seat of learning and virtue” had become utterly corrupt. It was an astounding fact, Convocation added, that a testimonial in favor of Wicliffe and his doctrines, with the seal of the university affixed to it, had lately issued from the halls of Oxford.¹² Arundel did not delay. Presently his delegates were down on the college. These inquisitors of heretical pravity summoned before them the suspected professors, and by threats of Henry’s burning statute compelled them to recant. They next examined the writings of Wicliffe. They extracted out of them 246 propositions which they deemed heretical.¹³ This list they sent to the archbishop. The primate, after branding it with his condemnation, forwarded it to the Pope, with a request that he would stamp it with his final anathema, and that he would send him a bull, empowering him to dig up Wicliffe’s bones and burn them. “The Pope,” says Collier, “granted the first, but refused the latter, not thinking it any useful part of discipline to disturb the ashes of the dead.”¹⁴

While, with the one hand, Arundel maintained the fight against the infant Protestantism of England, with the other he strove to promote a Catholic revival. He bethought him by what new rite he could honour, with what new grace he could crown the “mother of God.” He instituted, in honour of Mary, “the tolling of Aves,” with certain Aves, the due recital of which were to earn certain days of pardon.¹⁵ The ceremonies of the Roman Church were already

¹⁰Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 630.

¹¹This bull was afterwards voided by Sixtus IV. Wood, *Hist. Univ.*; Oxon, 205. Cotton’s *Abridgment*, p. 480. Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 630.

¹²The university seal, it is believed, was surreptitiously obtained; but the occurrence proves that among the professors at Oxford were not a few who thought with Wicliffe.

¹³Fox, bk. 5, p. 282; Lond., 1838.

¹⁴Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 631.

¹⁵Fox, bk. 5, p. 280.

very numerous, requiring a whole technological vocabulary to name them, and wellnigh all the days of the year for their observance. In his mandate to the Bishop of London, Arundel set forth the grounds and reasons of this new observance. The realm of England verily owed “Our Lady” much, the archbishop argued. She had been the “buckler of our protection.” She had “made our arms victorious,” and “spread our power through all the coasts of the earth.” Yet more, to the Virgin Mary the nation owed its escape from a portentous evil that menaced it, and of which it was dreadful to think what the consequences would have been, had it overtaken it. The archbishop does not name the monstrous thing; but it was easy to see what was meant, for the archbishop goes on to speak of a new species of wolf that waited to attack the inhabitants of England and destroy

[365] them, not by tearing them with their teeth after the usual manner of wild beasts, but in the exercise of some novel and strange instinct, by mingling poison with their food. “To whom [Mary] we may worthily ascribe, now of late in these our times, our deliverance from the ravening wolves, and the mouths of cruel beasts, who had prepared against our banquets a mess of meat mingled full of gall.”

¹⁶ On these grounds the archbishop issued his commands (Feb. 10th, 1410), that peals should be tolled, morning and evening, in praise of Mary; with a promise to all who should say the Lord’s prayer and a “hail Mary” five times at the morning peal, of a forty-days’ pardon.

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To whom, after “Our Lady,” the archbishop doubtless thought, did England owe so much as to himself? Accordingly, we find him putting in a modest claim to share in the honors he had decreed to his patroness. This next mandate, directed to Thomas Wilton, his somner, enjoined that, at what time he should pass through his Province of Canterbury, having his cross borne before him, the bells of all the parish churches should be rung, “in token of special reverence that they bear to us.” ¹⁸ Certain churches in London were temporarily closed by the archbishop, because “on Tuesday last, when we, between eight and nine of the clock, before dinner, passed openly on foot as it were through the midst of the City of

¹⁶Fox, bk. 5., p. 280.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

London, with our cross carried before us, they showed toward us unreverence, ringing not their bells at all at our coming.” “Wherefore we command you that by our authority you put all these churches under our indictment, suspending God’s holy organs and instruments in the same.”¹⁹

“Why,” inquires the chronicler, “though the bells did not clatter in the steeples, should the body of the church be suspended? The poor organs, methinks, suffered some wrong in being put to silence in the quire, because the bells rang not in the tower.” There are some who may smile at these devices of Arundel to strengthen Popery, as betokening vain-glory rather than insight. But we may grant that the astute archbishop knew what he was about. He thus made “the Church” ever present to Englishmen of that age. She awoke them from slumber in the morning, she sang them to repose at night. Her chimes were in their ears and her symbols before their eyes all day long. Every time they kissed an image, or repeated an Ave, or crossed themselves with holy water, they increased their reverence for “mother Church.” Every such act was a strengthening of the fetter which dulled the intellect and bound the soul. At each repetition the deep sleep of the conscience became yet deeper.

The persecution against the Protestants did not abate. The pursuit of heretics became more strict; and their treatment, at the hands of their captors, more cruel. The prisons in the bishops’ houses, heretofore simply places of confinement, were now often provided with instruments of torture. The Lollards’ Tower, at Lambeth, was crowded with confessors, who have left on the walls of their cell, in brief but touching phrase, the record of their “patience and faith,” to be read by the men of after-times; nay, by us, seeing these memorials are not yet effaced. Many, weak in faith and terrified by the violence that menaced them, appeared in penitential garb, with lighted tapers in their hand, at market crosses, and church doors, and read their recantation. But not all: else England at this day would have been what Spain is. There were others, more largely strengthened from on high, who aspired to the glory, than which there is no purer or brighter on earth, of dying for the Gospel. Thus the stake had its occasional victim.

¹⁹Ibid.

So passed the early years of English Protestantism. It did not grow up in dalliance and ease, amid the smiles of the great and the applause of the multitude; no, it was nurtured amid fierce and cruel storms. From its cradle it was familiar with hardship, with revilings and buffetings, with cruel mockings and scourgings, nay, moreover, with bonds and imprisonments. The mob derided it; power frowned upon it; and lordly Churchmen branded it as heresy, and pursued it with sword and faggot. Let us draw around its cradle, placed under no gorgeous roof, but in a prison-cell, with jailers and executioners waiting beside it. Let us forget, if only for awhile, the denominational names, and ecclesiastical classifications, that separate us; let us lay aside, the one his lawn and the other his Genevan cloak, and, simply in our character of Christians and Protestants, come hither, and contemplate the lowliness of our common origin. It seems as if the “young child” had been cast out to perish; the Roman Power stands before it ready to destroy it, and yet it has been said to it, “To thee will I give England.” There is a lesson here which, could we humble ourselves, and lay it duly to heart, would go far to awaken the love and bring back the union and strength of our first days.

Chapter 4: Efforts for the Redistribution of Ecclesiastical Property

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marcusstop

The Burning Bush—Petition of Parliament—Redistribution of Ecclesiastical Property—Defence of Archbishop Arundel—The King stands by the Church—The Petition Presented a Second Time—Its Second Refusal—More Powerful Weapons than Royal Edicts—Richard II. Deposed—Henry IV—Edict De Haeretico Comburendo—Griefs of the King—Calamities of the Country—Projected Crusade—Death of Henry IV

Picture: Archbishop Arundel at Oxford

Picture: Chamber in the Lollards' Tower, Lambeth Palace, where the Reformers were Confined

Picture: Facsimile of Part of a Page of Wicliffe's Bible

In the former chapter we saw the Protestants of England stigmatised as Lollards, proscribed by edicts, and haled to prisons, which they left, the many to read their recantation at cathedral doors and market crosses, and the few to fulfill their witness-bearing at the stake. The tempest was growing in violence every hour, and the little company on whom it beat so sorely seemed doomed to extinction. Yet in no age or country, perhaps, has the Church of God more perfectly realised the promise wrapped up in her earliest and most significant symbol, than in England at the present time. As amid the granite peaks of Horeb, so here in England, "The bush burned and was not consumed."

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This way of maintaining their testimony by suffering, was a surer path to victory than that which the English Protestants had fondly chalked out for themselves. In the sixth year of Henry IV., they had moved the king, through Parliament, to take possession of the temporalities of the Church, and redistribute them in such a manner

as would make them more serviceable to both the crown and the nation.

The Commons represented to the king that the clergy possessed a third of the lands in the realm, that they contributed nothing to the public burdens, and that their riches disqualified them from the due performance of their sacred functions. Archbishop Arundel was by the king's side when the petition was presented by the Speaker of the house, Sir John Cheney. He was not the man to stand silent when such an accusation was preferred against his order. True it was, said the archbishop, that the clergy did not go in person to the wars, but it was not less true that they always sent their vassals and tenants to the field, and in such numbers, and furnished with such equipments, as corresponded to the size of their estates; and further, the archbishop maintained that as regarded the taunt that the clerics were but drones, who lived idly at home while their countrymen were serving abroad, the Speaker had done them injustice. If they donned the surplice or betook them to their breviary, when their lay brethren buckled on the coat of mail, and grasped rapier or cross-bow, it was not because they were chary of their blood, or enamoured of ease, but because they wished to give their days and nights to prayer for their country's welfare, and especially for the success of its arms. While the soldiers of England were fighting, her priests were supplicating; ¹ the latter, not less than the former, contributed to those victories which were shedding such luster on the arms of England.

[368] The Speaker of the Commons, smiling at the primate's enthusiasm, replied that "he thought the prayers of the Church but a slender supply." Stung by this retort, Arundel quickly turned on Sir John, and charged him with profaneness. "I perceive, sir," said the prelate, "how the kingdom is likely to thrive, when the aids of devotion, and the favor of Heaven, are thus slighted and ridiculed."

The king "hung, as it were, in a balance of thought." The archbishop, perceiving his indecision, dropped on his knees before him, and implored Henry to remember the oath he had sworn on coming to the crown, to maintain the rights of the Church and defend the clergy; and he counselled him, above all, to beware incurring the

¹Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 30. Cobbett, vol. 1, cols. 295, 296. Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 620. 1050

guilt of sacrilege, and the penalties thereto annexed. The king was undecided no longer; he bade the archbishop dismiss his fears, and assured him that the clergy need be under no apprehensions from such proposals as the present, while he wore the crown; that he would take care to leave the Church in even a better condition than that in which he had found it. The hopes of the Lollards were thus rudely dashed.²

But their numbers continued to increase; by-and-by there came to be a “Lollard party,” as Walsingham calls it, in Parliament, and in the eleventh year of Henry’s reign they judged the time ripe for bringing forward their proposal a second time,. They made a computation of the ecclesiastical estates, which, according to their showing, amounted to 485,000 merks of yearly value, and contained 18,400 ploughs of land. This property, they suggested, should be divided into three parts, and distributed as follows: one part was to go to the king, and would enable him to maintain 6,000 men-at-arms, in addition to those he had at present in his pay; it would enable him besides to make a new creation of earls and knights. The second was to be divided, as an annual stipend, among the 15,000 priests who were to conduct the religious services of the nation; and the remaining third was to be appropriated to the founding of 100 new hospitals. But the proposal found no favor with the king, even though it promised to augment considerably his military following. He dared not break with the hierarchy, and he might be justly suspicious of the changes which so vast a project would draw after it.

Addressing the Commons in a tone of great severity, he charged them never again, so long as he lived, to come before the throne with any such proposal. He even refused to listen to the request with which they had accompanied their petition, that he would grant a mitigation of the edict against heresy, and permit convicted Lollards to be sent to his own prisons, rather than be immured in the more doleful strongholds of the bishops. Even these small favors the Protestants could not obtain, and lest the clergy should think that

²Walsingham, pp. 371, 372. Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, pp.620, 621.

Henry had begun to waver between the two faiths, he sealed his devotion to the Church by anew kindling the pile for the Lollards.³

By other weapons were the Wicliffites to win England than by royal edicts and Parliamentary petitions. They must take slow and laborious possession of it by their tears and their martyrdom. Although the king had done as they desired, and the edict had realised all that they expected from it, it would after all have been but a fictitious and barren acquisition, liable to be swept away by every varying wind that blew at court. But when, by their painful teachings, by their holy lives, and their courageous deaths, they had enlightened the understandings and won the hearts of their countrymen to the Protestant doctrine, then would they have taken possession of England in very deed, and in such fashion that they would hold it for ever. These early disciples did not yet clearly see wherein lay the great strength of Protestantism. The political activity into which they had diverged was an attempt to gather fruit, not only before the sun had ripened it, but even before they had well sowed the seed. The fabric of the Roman Church was founded on the belief, in the minds of Englishmen, that the Pope was heaven's delegate for conferring on men the pardon of their sins and the blessings of salvation. That belief must first be exploded. So long as it kept its hold, no material force, no political action, could suffice to overthrow the domination of Rome. Amid the scandals of the clergy and the decay of the nation, it would have continued to flourish to our day, had not the reforming and spiritual forces come to the rescue. We can the more easily pardon the mistake of the English Protestants of the fifteenth century when we reflect that, even yet, the sole efficacy-the omnipotency -of these forces finds only partial belief in the general mind of even the religious world.

[369] From the hour that the stake for Protestantism was planted in England, neither the king nor the nation had rest. Henry Plantagenet (Bolingbroke) had returned from exile, on his oath not to disturb the succession to the crown. He broke his vow, and dethroned Richard II. The Church, through her head the primate, was an accomplice with him in this deed. Arundel anointed the new king with oil from that mysterious vial which the Virgin was said to have given to Thomas

³Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 48. Walsingham, p. 379. Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 629.

à Becket, during his exile in France, telling him that the kings on whose head this oil should be poured would prove valiant champions of the Church. ⁴ The coronation was followed by the dark tragedy in the Castle of Pontefract; and that, again, by the darker, though more systematic, violence of the edict *De Hereretico Comburendo*, which was followed in its turn by the imprisonings in the Tower, and the burnings in Smithfield. The reign thus inaugurated had neither glory abroad nor prosperity at home. Faction rose upon faction; revolt trod on the heels of revolt; and a train of national calamities followed in rapid succession, till at last Henry had completely lost the popularity which helped him to mount the throne; and the terror with which he reigned made his subjects regret the weak, frivolous, and vicious Richard, whom he had deprived first of his crown, and next of his life. Rumors that Richard still lived, and would one day claim his own, were continually springing up, and occasioned, not only perpetual alarms to the king, but frequent conspiracies among his nobles; and the man who was the first to plant the stake in England for the disciples of the Gospel had, before many days passed by, to set up scaffolds for the peers of his realm. His son, Prince Henry, added to his griefs. The thought, partly justified by the wild life which the prince then led, and the abandoned companions with whom he had surrounded himself, that he wished to seize the crown before death had given it to him in the regular way, continually haunted the royal imagination; and, to obviate this danger, the monarch took at times the ludicrous precaution of placing the regalia on his pillow when he went to sleep. ⁵ His brief reign of thirteen years and five months wore away, as an old chronicler says, “with little pleasure.”

The last year of Henry’s life was signalised by a projected expedition to the Holy Land. The monarch deemed himself called to the

⁴Walsingham, pp. 360, 361. This vial, the chronicler tells us, had lain for many years, neglected, locked up in a chest in the Tower of London.

⁵The chronicler, Holinshed, records a curious interview between the prince and his father, in the latter days of Henry. The prince heard that he had been slandered to the king, and went to court with a numerous train, to clear himself. “He was appareled,” says Holinshed, “in a gown of blue satin and full of small owlet holes, at every hole the needle hanging by a silk thread with which it was sewed.” Falling on his knees, he pulled out a dagger, and presenting it to the king, he bade him plunge it into his breast, protesting that he did not wish to live a single day under his father’s suspicions. The king, casting away the dagger, kissed the prince, and was reconciled to him. (*Chron.*, vol. 3, p. 54.)

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pious labor of delivering Jerusalem from the Infidel. If he should succeed in a work so meritorious, he would spend what might remain to him of life with an easier conscience, as having made atonement for the crimes by which he had opened his way to the throne. As it turned out, however, his efforts to achieve this grand enterprise but added to his own cares, and to his subjects' burdens. He had collected ships, money, provisions, and soldiers. All was ready; the fleet waited only till the king should come on board to weigh anchor and set sail. ⁶ But before embarking, the monarch must needs visit the shrine of St. Edward. "While he was making his prayers," says Holinshed, "there as it were to take his leave, and so to procede forth on his journie, he was suddenlie and grievouslie taken, that such as were about him feared that he should have died presentlie; wherefore, to relieve him, if it were possible, they bare him into a chamber that was next at hand, belonging to the Abbot of Westminster, where they laid him on a pallet before the fire, and used all remedies to revive him. At length he recovered his speech and understanding, and perceiving himself in a strange place which he knew not, he willed to know if the chamber had any particular name, whereunto answer was made that it was called 'Jerusalem.' Then said the king, 'Lauds be given to the Father of Heaven, for I know that I shall die here in this chamber, according to the prophecy of me, which declared that I should depart this life in Jerusalem.'" ⁷

⁶Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 632. Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 57.

⁷Holinshed, Vol 3, p.58.

Chapter 5: Trial and Condemnation of Sir John Oldcastle

Henry V—A Coronation and Tempest—Interpretations—Struggles for Liberty—Youth of Henry—Change on becoming King—Arundel his Evil Genius—Sir John Oldcastle—Becomes Lord Cobham by Marriage—Embraces Wicliffe’s Opinions—Patronises the Lollard Preachers—Is Denounced by Arundel—Interview between Lord Cobham and the King—Summoned by the Archbishop—Citations Torn Down—Confession of his Faith—Apprehended—Brought before the Archbishop’s Court—Examination—His Opinions on the Sacrament, Confession, the Pope, Images, the Church, etc—His Condemnation as a Heretic—Forged Abjuration—He Escapes from the Tower

Picture: Lord Cobham at a Lollard Preaching

Picture: View of the Tower of London from the River Thames (1700)

Picture: Friar Preaching from a Movable Pulpit (Royal MS., 14E, 3)

Struck down by apoplexy in the prime of manhood, March 20th, 1413, Henry IV. was carried to his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral, and his son, Henry V., mounted his throne. The new king was crowned on Passion Sunday, the 9th of April. The day was signalled by a fearful tempest, that burst over England, and which the spirit of the age variously interpreted. ¹ Not a few regarded it as a portent of evil, which gave warning of political storms that were about to convulsethe State of England. ² But others, more sanguine, construed this occurrence more hopefully. As the tempest, said they, disperses the gloom of winter, and summons from their dark abodes in the earth the flowers of spring, so will the even-handed justice of the

¹A sore, ruggie, and tempestuous day, with wind, snow, and sleet, that men greatly marvelled thereat, making diverse interpretations what the same might signifie.” (Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 61.)

²Fox, bk. 5, p. 282.

king dispel the moral vapors which have hung above the land during the late reign, and call forth the virtues of order and piety to adorn and bless society.³ Meanwhile the future, which men were striving to read, was posting towards them, bringing along with it those sharp tempests that were needful to drive away the exhalations of a night which had long stagnated over England. Religion was descending to resume the place that superstition had usurped, and awaken in the English people those aspirations and tendencies, which found their first arena of development on the field of battle; and their second, and more glorious one, in the halls of political and theological discussion; and their final evolution, after two centuries, in the sublime fabric of civil and religious liberty that stood completed in England, that other nations might study its principles and enjoy its blessings.

The youth of Henry V., who now governed England, had been disorderly. It was dishonored by “the riot of pleasure, the frolic of debauchery, the outrage of wine.”⁴ The jealousy of his father, by excluding him from all public employment, furnished him with an excuse for filling the vacancies of his mind and his time with low amusements and degrading pleasures. But when the prince put on the crown he put off his former self. He dismissed his old associates, called around him the counsellors of his father, bestowed the honors and offices of the State upon men of capacity and virtue; and, pensioning his former companions, he forbade them to enter his presence till they had become better men. He made, in short, a commendable effort to effect a reformation in manners and religion. “Now placed on the royal seat of the realm,” says the chronicler, “he determined to begin with something acceptable to the Divine Majesty, and therefore commanded the clergy sincerelie and trulie to preach the Word of God, and to live accordingle, that they might be lanterns of light to the temporalitie, as their profession required. The laymen he willed to serve God and obey their prince, prohibiting them, above all things, breach of matrimonie, custom in swearing, and wilful perjurie.”⁵

It was the unhappiness of Henry V., who meant so well by his people, that he knew not the true source whence alone a real refor-

³Walsingham, p. 382.

⁴Hume, chap. 19.

⁵Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 62.

mation can proceed. The astute Arundel was still by his side, and guided the steps of the prince into the same paths in which his father had walked. Lollard blood still continued to flow, and new victims from time to time mounted the martyr's pile.

The most illustrious of the Protestants of that reign was Sir John Oldcastle, a knight of Herefordshire. Having married the heiress of Cowling Castle, near Rochester, he sat in Parliament under the title of Lord Cobham, in right of his wife's barony.⁶ The youth of Lord Cobham had been stained with gay pleasures; but the reading of the Bible, and the study of Wicliffe's writings, had changed his heart; and now, to the knightly virtues of bravery and honour, he added the Christian graces of humility and purity. He had borne arms in France, under Henry IV., who set a high value on his military accomplishments. Hewas not less esteemed by the son, Henry V., for his private worth,⁷ his shrewd sense, and his gallant bearing as a soldier.⁸ But the "dead fly" in the noble qualities and upright character of the stout old baron, in the opinion of the king, was his Lollardism.

With characteristic frankness, Lord Cobham made no secret of his attachment to the doctrines of Wicliffe. He avowed, in his place in Parliament, so early as the year 1391, "that it would be very commodious for England if the Pope's jurisdiction stopped at the town of Calais, and did not cross the sea."⁹

It is said of him, too, that he had copies made of Wicliffe's works, and sent them to Bohemia, France, Spain, Portugal, and other countries.¹⁰

He threw open Cowling Castle to the Lollard preachers, making it their head-quarters while they itinerated in the neighborhood, preaching the Gospel. He himself often attended their sermons, taking his stand, sword in hand, by the preacher's side, to defend him from the insults of the friars.¹¹ Such open disregard of the

⁶See Dugdale, Baronetage.

⁷Walsingham, p. 382.

⁸Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 632.

⁹Bale, Brefs Chron., p. 13; Lond., 1729.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Collier, vol 1, bk. 7, p. 632.

ecclesiastical authority was not likely long to either escape notice or be exempt from censure.

Convocation was sitting at the time (1413) in St. Paul's. The archbishop rose and called the attention of the assembly to the progress of Lollardism, and, pointing specially to Lord Cobham, declared that "Christ's coat would never be without seam" till that notorious abettor of heretics were taken out of the way. On that point all were agreed; but Cobham had a friend in the king, and it would not do to have him out forthwith into Smithfield and burn him, as if he were an ordinary heretic. They must, if possible, take the king along with them in all they did against Lord Cobham. Accordingly, Archbishop Arundel, with other bishops and members of Convocation, waited on the king, and laid before him their complaint against Lord Cobham. Henry replied that he would first try what he himself could do with the brave old knight whom he bore in so high esteem.¹²

The king sent for Cobham, and exhorted him to abandon his scruples, and submit to his mother the Church. "You, most worthy prince," was the reply, "I am always prompt and willing to obey, forasmuch as I know you are a Christian king, and minister of God; unto you, next to God, I owe my whole obedience, and submit me thereunto. But, as touching the Pope and his spiritualitie, trulie I owe them neither suit nor service, forasmuch as I know him, by the Scriptures, to be the great Antichrist, the open adversary of God, and the abomination standing in the holy place."¹³ At the hearing of these words the king's countenance fell; his favor for Cobham gave way to his hatred of heresy; he turned away, purposing with himself to interfere no farther in the matter.

The archbishop came again to the king, who now gave his ready consent that they should proceed against Lord Cobham according to the laws of the Church. These, in all such cases as the present, were compendiously summarised in the one statute of Henry IV., *De Haeretico Comburendo*. The archbishop dispatched a messenger to Cobham, summoning him to appear before him on September 2nd, and answer to the articles of accusation. Acting on the principle

¹²Bale, p. 23. Holinshed, vol 3, p. 62.

¹³Bale, pp. 24, 25. Fox. bk. 5, p. 282.

that he “owed neither suit nor service” to the Pope and his vassals, Lord Cobham paid no attention to the summons. Arundel next prepared citations, in due form, and had them posted up on the gates of Cowling Castle, and on the doors of the neighboring Cathedral of Rochester. These summonses were speedily torn down by the friends and retainers of Lord Cobham. The archbishop, seeing the Church in danger of being brought into contempt, and her authority of being made a laughing-stock, hastened to unsheathe against the defiant knight her ancient sword, so terrible in those ages. He excommunicated the great Lollard; but even this did not subdue him. A third time were citations posted up, commanding his appearance, ‘under threat of severe penalties; ¹⁴ and again the summonses were contemptuously torn down. [372] [373]

Cobham had a stout heart in his bosom, but he would show the king that he had also a good cause. Taking his pen, he sat down and drew out a statement of his belief. He took, as the groundwork of his confession of faith, the Apostles’ Creed, giving, mainly in the words of Scripture, the sense in which he received its several articles. His paper has all the simplicity and spirituality, but not the clear, well-defined and technical expression, of the Reformation theology of the sixteenth century. ¹⁵ He carried it to the king, craving him to have it examined “by the most godly, wise, and learned men of his realm.” Henry refused to look at it. Handing it to the archbishop, the king said that, in this matter, his Grace was judge.

There followed, on the part of Cobham, a proposal which, doubtless, would cause astonishment to a modern divine, but which was not accounted incongruous or startling in an age when so many legal, political, and even moral questions were left for decision to the wager of battle. He offered to bring a hundred knights and esquires into the field, for his purgation, against an equal number on the side of his accusers; or else, said he, “I shall fight, myself, for life or death, in the quarrel of my faith, with any man living, Christian or heathen, the king and the lords of his council excepted.” ¹⁶ The proposal was declined, and the issue was that the king suffered him to be seized, in his privy chamber, and imprisoned in the Tower. [374]

¹⁴Bale, pp. 25-28. Collier, 7, 633. Fox, 5, 282.

¹⁵The document is given in full by Bale and Fox.

¹⁶Bale, p. 35.

On Saturday, September 23rd, 1413, Lord Cobham was brought before Archbishop Arundel, who, assisted by the Bishops of London and Winchester, opened his court in the chapter-house of St. Paul's. The primate offered him absolution if he would submit and confess himself. He replied by pulling out of his bosom and reading a written statement of his faith, handing a copy to the primate, and keeping one for himself. The court then adjourned till the Monday following, when it met in the Dominican Friars, on Ludgate Hill, with a more numerous attendance of bishops, doctors, and friars. Absolution was again offered the prisoner, on the old terms: "Nay, forsooth will I not," he replied, "for I never yet trespassed against you, and therefore I will not do it." Then falling down on his knees on the pavement, and extending his hands toward heaven, he said, "I shrive me here unto thee, my eternal living God, that in my frail youth I offended thee, O Lord, most grievously, in pride, wrath, and gluttony, in covetousness and in lechery. Many men have I hurt, in mine anger, and done many horrible sins; good Lord, I ask thee, mercy." Then rising up, the tears streaming down his face, he turned to the people, and cried, "Lo, good people, for the breaking of God's law these men never yet cursed me; but now, for their own laws and traditions, they most cruelly handle me and other men."¹⁷

The court took a little while to recover itself after this scene. It then proceeded with the examination of Lord Cobham, thus: -

The archbishop: "What say you, sir, to the four articles sent to the Tower for your consideration, and especially to the article touching the Sacrament of the altar? "

Lord Cobham: "My Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, sitting at his last supper, with his most dear disciples, the night before he should suffer, took bread in his hand, and, giving thanks to his eternal Father, blessed it, brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, 'Take it unto you, and eat thereof, all. This is my body, which shall be betrayed for you. Do this hereafter in my remembrance.' This do I thoroughly believe."

The archbishop: "Do you believe that it was bread after the Sacramental words had been spoken? "

Lord Cobham: "I believe that in the Sacrament of the altar is

¹⁷Bale. pp. 50, 51. Fox. bk. 5, p. 284.

Christ's very body, in form of bread; the same that was born of the

Virgin, done on the cross, and now is glorified in heaven."

A doctor: "After the Sacramental words be uttered there remaineth no bread, but only the body of Christ."

Lord Cobham: "You said once to me, in the Castle of Cowling, that the sacred Host was not Christ's body. But I held then against you, and proved that therein was his body, though the seculars and friars could not therein agree, but held one against the other."

Many doctors, with great noise: "We say all that it is God's body."

They angrily insisted that he should answer whether it was material bread after consecration, or no.

Lord Cobham (looking earnestly at the archbishop): "I believe surely that it is Christ's body in form of bread. Sir, believe not you thus?" The archbishop: "Yea, marry, do I."

The doctors: "Is it only Christ's body after the consecration of a priest, and no bread, or not?" Lord Cobham: "It is both Christ's body and bread. I shall prove it thus: For like as Christ, dwelling here upon the earth, had in him both Godhood and manhood, and had the invisible Godhood covered under that manhood which was only visible and seen in him: so in the Sacrament of the altar is Christ's very body, and very bread also, as I believe. The bread is the thing which we see with our eyes; the body of Christ, which is his flesh and his blood, is hidden thereunder, and not seen but in faith."

Smiling to one another, and all speaking together: "It is a foul heresy."

A bishop: "It is a manifest heresy to say that it is bread after the Sacramental words have been spoken."

Lord Cobham: "St. Paul, the apostle, was, I am sure, as wise as you are, and more godly-learned, and he called it bread: writing to the Corinthians, he says, 'The bread that we break, is it not the partaking of the body of Christ?'"

All: "St. Paul must be otherwise understood; for it is heresy to say that it is bread after consecration."

Lord Cobham: "How do you make that good? "

The court: "It is against the determination of holy Church."

The archbishop: "We sent you a writing concerning the faith of the blessed Sacrament, clearly determined by the Church of Rome, our mother, and by the holy doctors."

[375] Lord Cobham: "I know none holier than is Christ and his apostle. And for that determination, I wot, it is none of theirs, for it standeth not with the Scriptures, but is manifestly against them. If it be the Church's, as ye say it is, it hath been hers only since she received the great poison of worldly possessions, and not afore."

The archbishop: "What do you think of holy Church? "

Lord Cobham: "Holy Church is the number of them which shall be saved, of which Christ is the head. Of this Church, one part is in heaven with Christ; another in purgatory (you say); and the third is here on earth."

Doctor John Kemp: "Holy Church hath determined that, every Christian man ought to be shriven by a priest. What say ye to this?"

Lord Cobham: "A diseased or sore wounded man had need to have a wise surgeon and a true. Most necessary were it, therefore, to be first shriven unto God, who only knoweth our diseases, and can help us. I deny not in this the going to a priest, if he be a man of good life and learning. If he be a vicious man, I ought rather to flee from him; for I am more likely to have infection than cure from him."

Doctor Kemp: "Christ ordained St. Peter to be his Vicar here on earth, whose see is the Church of Rome; and he granted the same power to all St. Peter's successors in that see. Believe ye not this?"

Lord Cobham: "He that followeth St. Peter most nearly in holy living is next unto him in succession."

Another doctor: "What do ye say of the Pope?"

Lord Cobham: "He and you together maketh the whole great Antichrist. The Pope is the head; you, bishops, priests, prelates, and monks, are the body; and the Begging Friars are the tail, for they hide the wickedness of you both with their sophistry."

Doctor Kemp: "Holy Church hath determined that it is meritorious to go on pilgrimage to holy places, and there to worship holy relics and images of saints and martyrs. What say ye to this?"

Lord Cobham: "I owe them no service by any commandment of God. It were better to brush the cobwebs from them and put them away, or bury them out of sight, as ye do other aged people,

which are God's images. But this I say unto you, and I would all the world should know it, that with your shrives and idols, your reigned absolutions and pardons, ye draw unto you the substance, wealth, and chief pleasures of all Christian realms."

A priest: "What, sir, will ye not worship good images?"

Lord Cobham: "What worship should I give unto them?"

Friar Palmer: "Sir, will ye worship the cross of Christ, that he died upon?"

Lord Cobham: "Where is it?"

The friar: "I put the case, sir, that it were here even now before you."

Lord Cobham: "This is a wise man, to put to me an earnest question of a thing, and yet he himself knows not where the thing is. Again I ask you, what worship should I give it?"

A priest: "Such worship as St. Paul speaks of, and that is this, 'God forbid that I should joy, but only in the cross of Jesus Christ.'"

The Bishop of London: "Sir, ye wot well that Christ died on a material cross."

Lord Cobham: "Yea, and I wot also that our salvation came not by that material cross, but by him alone that died thereon; and well I wot that holy St. Paul rejoiced in no other cross but Christ's passion and death."

The archbishop: "Sir, the day passeth away. Ye must either submit yourself to the ordinance of holy Church, or else throw yourself into most deep danger. See to it in time, for anon it will be too late."

Lord Cobham: "I know not to what purpose I should submit me."

The archbishop: "We once again require you to look to yourself, and to have no other opinion in these matters, save that is the universal faith and belief of the holy Church of Rome; and so, like an obedient child, return to the unity of your mother. See to it, I say, in time, for yet ye may have remeid, whereas anon it will be too late."

Lord Cobham: "I will none otherwise believe in these points than I have told you before. Do with me what you will."

The archbishop: "We must needs do the law: we must proceed to a definite sentence, and judge and condemn you for an heretic."

[376] Hereupon the archbishop stood up to pronounce sentence. The whole assembly-bishops, doctors, and friars-rose at the same time, and uncovered. The primate drew forth two papers which had been prepared beforehand, and proceeded to read them. The first set forth the heresies of which Lord Cobham had been convicted, and the efforts which the court, “desiring the health of his soul,” had made to bring him to “the unity of the Church;” but he, “as a child of iniquity and darkness,¹⁸ had so hardened his heart that he would not listen to the voice of his pastor.” “We, thereupon,” continued the archbishop, turning to the second paper, “judge, declare, and condemn the said Sir John Oldcastle, knight, for a most pernicious and detestable heretic, committing him to the secular jurisdiction and power, to do him thereupon to death.”

This sentence Arundel pronounced with a sweet and affable voice, the tears trickling down his face. It is the primate himself who tells us so; otherwise we should not have known it; for certainly we can trace no signs of pity or relenting in the terms of the sentence. “I pronounced it,” says the archbishop, referring to the sentence dooming Sir John to the fire, “in the kindest and sweetest manner, with a weeping countenance.”¹⁹ If the primate wept, no one saw a tear on the face of Lord Cobham. “Turning to the multitude,” says Bale, “Lord Cobham said, with a most cheerful voice, ‘Though ye judge my body, which is but a wretched thing, yet can ye do no harm to my soul. He that created it will, of his infinite mercy, save it. Of that I have no manner of doubt.’ Then falling down on his knees, and lifting up his eyes, with hands outstretched toward heaven, he prayed, saying, ‘Lord God eternal, I beseech thee, for thy great mercy’s sake, to forgive my pursuers, if it be thy blessed will.’ He was thereupon delivered to Sir Robert Morley, and led back to the Tower.”²⁰

¹⁸*Iniquitatis et tenebrarum filius.*” (Walsingham, *Hist. Ang.*, p. 385.)

¹⁹*Affabiliter et suaviter recitavit excommunicationem, flebili vultu.*” (Rymer, *Federa*, vol. 5, p. 50. Walsingham, p. 384.)

²⁰We give this account of Lord Cobham’s (Sir John Oldcastle) examination, slightly abridged, from Bale’s *Brefe Chronycle*, pp. 49-73. Walsingham gives substantially, though more briefly, the same account of the matter (pp. 383, 384). See also Collier, vol 1, bk. 7, p. 634. “Lingard’s commentary on the trial,” says M’Crie (*Am. Eng. Presb.*, 51), “is in the true spirit of the religion which doomed the martyr to the stake with crocodile

The sentence was not to be executed till after fifty days.²¹ This respite, so unusual, may have been owing to a lingering affection for his old friend on the part of the king, or it may have been prompted by the hope that he would submit himself to the Church, and that his recantation would deal a blow to the cause of Lollardism. But Lord Cobham had counted the cost, and his firm resolve was to brave the horrors of Smithfield, rather than incur the guilt of apostacy. His persecutors, at last, despaired of bringing him in a penitent's garb, with lighted tapers, to the door of St. Paul's, as they had done humbler and weaker confessors, there to profess his sorrow for having scoffed at the prodigious mystery of transubstantiation, and placed the authority of the Scriptures above that of the Church. But if a real recantation could not be had, a spurious one might be fabricated, and given forth as the knight's confession. This was the expedient to which his enemies had now recourse. They gave out that "Sir John had now become a good man, and had lowlily submitted himself in all things to holy Church;" and thereupon they produced and published a written "abjuration," in which they made Lord Cobham profess the most unbounded homage for the Pope ([John 23](#)!), "Christ's Vicar on earth and head of the Church," his clergy, his Sacraments, his laws, his pardons and dispensations, and recommend "all Christian people to observe, and also most meekly to obey, the aforesaid;" and further, they made him, in this "abjuration," renounce as "errors and heresies" all the doctrines he had maintained before the bishops, and, laying his hand upon the "holy evangel of God," to swear that he should nevermore henceforth hold these heresies, "or any other like unto them, wittingly."²²

The fabricators of this "abjuration" had overshot the mark. But small discernment, truly, was needed to detect so clumsy a forgery. Its authors were careful, doubtless, that the eye of the man whom it so grievously defamed should not light upon it; and yet it would appear that information was conveyed to Cobham, in his prison, of the part the priests were making him act in public; for we find him sending out to rebut the slanders and falsehoods that were spread

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tears: "The prisoner's conduct was as arrogant and insulting as that of his judge was mild and dignified! "" (Hist. Eng., vol. 5, p. 5.)

²¹Walsingham, p. 385.

²²Bale, pp. 83-38. Fox, bk. 5, p. 288.

abroad regarding him, and protesting that as he had professed when he stood before the archbishop, so did he still believe,²³ “This abjuration,” says Fox, “never came into the hands of Lord Cobham, neither was it compiled by them for that purpose, but only to blear the eyes of the unlearned multitude for a time.”²⁴ Meanwhile- whether by the aid of his friends, or by connivance of the governor, is not certainly known-Lord Cobham escaped from the Tower and fled to Wales, where he remained secreted for four years.

²³Fox, bk. 5, p.287.

²⁴Ibid, bk. 5, p.288.

Chapter 6: Lollardism Denounced as Treason

Spread of Lollardism—Clergy Complain to the King—Activity of the Lollards—Accused of Plotting the Overthrow of the Throne and Commonwealth—Midnight Meeting of Lollards at St. Giles-in-the-Fields—Alarm of the King—He Attacks and Disperses the Assembly—Was it a Conspiracy or a Conventicle?—An Old Device Revived

Picture: Lord Cobham before the Bishops

Picture: Henry V.'s Attack upon a Lollard Conventicle

Lord Cobham had for the time escaped from the hands of his persecutors, but humbler confessors were within their reach, and on these Arundel and his clergy now proceeded to wreak their vengeance. This thing, which they branded as heresy, and punished in the fire, was spreading over England despite all their rigors. That the new opinions were dangerous to the authority of the Roman Church was sufficiently clear, but it suited the designs of the hierarchy to represent them as dangerous also to the good order of the State. They went to the king, and complaining of the spread of Lollardism, told him that it was the enemy of kings and the foe of commonwealths, and that if it were allowed to remain longer unsuppressed, it would in no long time be the undoing of his realm. "The heretics and Lollards of Wicliffe's opinion," said they, "are suffered to preach abroad so boldly, to gather conventicles unto them, to keep schools in men's houses, to make books, compile treatises, and write ballads; to teach privately in angles and corners, as in woods, fields, meadows, pastures, groves, and caves of the ground. This," they added, "will be a destruction to the commonwealth, a subversion to the land, and an utter decay of the king's estate royal, if a remedy be not sought in time."¹

This picture, making allowance for some little exaggeration, shows us the wonderful activity of these early Protestants, and what

¹Bale, p. 90.

a variety of agencies they had already begun to employ for the propagation of their opinions. It justifies the saying of Bale, that “if England at that time had not been unthankful for the singular benefit that God then sent it in these good men, the days of Antichrist and his tyrannous brood had been shortened there long ago.”²

[378] The machinations of the priests bore further fruit. The more effectually to rouse the apprehensions of the king, and lead him to cut off the very men who would have sowed the seeds of order in his dominions, and been a bulwark around his throne, they professed to adduce a specific instance in support of their general allegations of disloyalty and treason against the Lollards. In January, 1414, they repaired to Eltham, where the king was then residing, and startled him with the intelligence of a formidable insurrection of the Wicliffites, with Lord Cobham at their head, just ready to break out. The Lollards, they declared, proposed to dethrone the king, murder the royal household, pull down Westminster Abbey, and all the cathedrals in the realm, and to wind up by confiscating all the possessions of the Church.³ To give a coloring of truth to the story, they specified the time and place fixed upon for the outbreak of the diabolical plot. The conspirators were to meet on a certain midnight “in Ficket Field beside London, on the back side of St. Giles,” and then and there begin their terrible work.⁴ The king on receiving the alarming news quitted Eltham, and repaired, with a body of armed men, to his Palace of Westminster, to be on the spot and ready to quell the expected rebellion. The night came when this terrible plot was to explode, and to leave before morning its memorials in the overthrow of the throne, and the destruction of the hierarchy. The martial spirit of the future hero of Agincourt was roused. Giving orders for the gates of London to be closed, and “unfurling a banner,” says Walden, “with a cross upon it”—after the Pope’s example when he wars against the Turk—the king marched forth to engage the rebels. He found no such assembly as he had been led to expect. There was no Lord Cobham there; there were no armed men present. In short, instead of conspirators in rank and file, ready to sustain the onset of the royal troops, the king encountered only a congregation

²Bale, p. 16.

³Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 634.

⁴Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 63.

of citizens, who had chosen this hour and place as the fittest for a field preaching. Such, in sober truth, appears to have been the character of the assembly. When the king rode in among them with his men-at-arms, he met absolutely with no resistance. Without leaders and without arms, the multitude broke up and fled. Some were cut down on the spot, the rest were pursued, and of these many were taken.

The gates of the city had been closed, and why? “To prevent the citizens joining the rebels,” say the accusers of the Lollards, who would fain have us believe that this was an organised conspiracy. The men of London, say they, were ready to rush out in hundreds to support the Lollards against the king’s troops. But where is the evidence of this? We do not hear of a single citizen arming himself. Why did not the Londoners sally forth and join their friends outside before night had fallen and they were attacked by the soldiery? Why did they not meet them the moment they arrived on Ficket Field? Their coming was known to their foes, why not also to their friends? No; the gates of London were shut for the same reason, doubtless, which led, at an after-period, to the closing of the gates of Paris when a conventicle was held outside its walls—even that the worshippers, when attacked, might not find refuge in the city.

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The idea that this was an insurrection, planned and organised, for the overthrow of Government, and the entire subversion of the whole ecclesiastical and political estate of England, appears to us too absurd to be entertained.⁵ Such revolutionary and sanguinary schemes were not more alien to the character and objects of the Lollards than they

⁵The allegation of conspiracy, advanced beforehand by the priests, was of course entered on the records of King’s Bench as the ground of proceedings, but it stands altogether unsupported by proof or probability. No papers containing the plan of revolution were ever discovered. No confession of such a thing was made by any of those who were seized and executed. Even Walsingham can only say, “The king heard they intended to destroy him and the monasteries,” etc., and “Many were taken who were said to have conspired” (*qui dicebantur conspirasse*) - *Hist. Ang.*, p. 386. When four years afterwards Lord Cobham was taken and condemned, his judges did not dare to confront him with the charge of conspiracy, but simply outlawry, passed upon him when he fled. As an instance of the wild rumors then propagated against the Lollards, Walden, the king’s confessor, and Polydore Virgil, the Pope’s collector of Peter’s pence in England, in their letters to Martin V., give vivid descriptions of terrible insurrections in England, wherein, as Bale remarks, “never a man was hurt;” and Walden, in his first preface to his fourth book against the Wicliffites, says that Sir John Oldcastle conspired against King Henry V. in the first year

were beyond their resources. They sought, indeed, the sequestration or redistribution of the ecclesiastical property, but they employed for this end none but the legitimate means of petitioning Parliament. Rapine, bloodshed, revolution, were abhorrent to them. If the work they now had in hand was indeed the arduous one of overturning a powerful Government, how came they to assemble without weapons? Why, instead of making a display of their numbers and power, as they would have done had their object been what their enemies alleged, did they cover themselves with the darkness of the night? While so many circumstances throw not only doubt, but ridicule, upon the idea of conspiracy, where are the proofs of such a thing? When searched to the bottom, the matter rests only on the allegations of the priests. The priests said so to the king. Thomas Walsingham, monk of St. Albans, reported it in his *Chronicles*; and one historian after another has followed in his wake, and treated us to an account of this formidable rebellion, which they would have us believe had so nearly plunged the kingdom into revolution, and extinguished the throne in blood. No the epithet of heresy alone was not enough to stigmatize the young Protestantism of England. To heresy must be joined treason, in order to make Lollardism sufficiently odious; and when this double-headed monster should be seen by the terrified imaginations of statesmen, stalking through the land, striking at the throne and the altar, trampling on law as well as on religion, confiscating the estate of the noble as well as the glebe of the bishop, and wrapping castle and hamlet in flames, then would the monarch put forth all his power to crush the destroyer and save the realm. The monks of Paris a hundred and twenty years after drew the same hideous picture of Protestantism, and frightened the King of France into planting the stake for the Huguenots. This was the game which had begun to be played in England. Lollardism, said the priests, means revolution. To make such a charge is an ancient device. It is

of his reign, and offered a golden noble for everyhead of monk, canon, friar, or priest that should be brought to him; while in his *Fasciculus Zizaniorum Wiclevi*, he tells us that Sir John was at that very time a prisoner in the Tower (Bale, p. 101). Fox, the martyrologist, charges the Papists with not only inventing the plot, but forging the records which accuse Sir John Oldcastle of complicity in it; and though Collier has attempted to reply to Fox, it is with no great success. All dispassionate men will now grant that the meeting was a voluntary one for worship, or a trap laid for the Lollards by their enemies.

long since a certain city was spoken of before a powerful monarch as “the rebellious and the bad,” within which they had “moved sedition of old time.”⁶ The calumny has been often repeated since; but no king ever yet permitted himself to be deceived by it, who had not cause to rue it in the tarnishing of his throne and the impoverishing of his realm, and it might be in the ruin of both.

⁶Ezra 4:12-15.

Chapter 7: Martyrdom of Lord Cobham

Imprisonments and Martyrdoms—Flight of Lollards to other Countries- Death of Archbishop Arundel—His Character—Lord Cobham—His Seizure in Wales by Lord Powis—Brought to London—Summoned before Parliament—Condemned on the Former Charge—Burned at St. Giles-in-the-Fields—His Christian Heroism—Which is the Greater Hero, Henry V. or Lord Cobham?—The World’s True Benefactors—The Founders of England’s Liberty and Greatness—The Seeds Sown—The Full Harvest to Come

Picture: Sir John Oldcastle, afterwards Lord Cobham

The dispersion of this unarmed assembly, met in the darkness of the night, on the then lonely and thicket-covered field of St. Giles, to listen, it might be, to some favourite preacher, or to celebrate an act of worship, was followed by the execution of several Lollards. The most distinguished of these was Sir Roger Acton, known to be a friend of Lord Cobham. He was seized at the midnight meeting on St. Giles’ Field, and was immediately thereafter condemned and executed. The manner of his death has been variously reported. Some chroniclers say he was burned,¹ others that he was drawn on a hurdle to Tyburn, and there hanged.² Two other Lollards were put to death at the same time—Master John Brown, and John Beverly, formerly a priest, but now a Wicliffite preacher. “So many persons were apprehended,” says Holinshed, “that all the prisons in and about London were full.” The leaders only, however, were put to death, “being condemned,” says the chronicler, “for heresy by the clergy, and attainted of high treason in the Guildhall of London, and adjudged for that offense to be drawn and hanged, and for heresy to be consumed with fire, gallows and all, which judgment was executed the same month on the said Sir Roger Acton, and

¹Bale, p. 10.

²Fox, bk. 5, p. 288.

twenty-eight others.”³ The chronicler, however, goes on to say, what strongly corroborates the view we have taken of this affair, even that the overthrow of the Government formed no part of the designs of these men, that their only crime was attachment to Protestant truth, and that their assembling, which has been magnified into a dark and diabolical plot, was simply a peaceful meeting for worship. “Certain affirm,” says Holinshed, “that it was for reigned causes, surmised by the spirituality, more upon displeasure than truth; and that they were assembled to hear their preacher (the aforesaid Beverly) in that place there, out of the way from resort of people, since they might not come together openly about any such matter, without danger to be apprehended.”⁴ Other martyrdoms followed. Of these sufferers some were burned in Smithfield, others were put to death in the provinces; and not a few, to escape the stake, fled into exile, as Bale testifies. “Many fled out of the land into Germany, Bohemia, France, Spain, Portugal, and into the wilds of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.”⁵ Such terror had the rigor of the archbishop infused into the now numerous adherents of the Protestant doctrines.

We pause to record another death, which followed, at the distance of less than a month, those of which we have just made mention. This death takes us, not to Smithfield, where the stake glorifies those whom it consumes, but to the archiepiscopal Palace of Lambeth. There on his bed, Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, together with his life, was yielding up his primacy, which he had held for seventeen years.⁶

Thomas Arundel was of noble birth, being the son of Richard Fitz-Alan, Earl of Arundel. His talents, naturally good, had been improved by study and experience; he was fond of pomp, subtle, resolute, and as stern in his measures as he was suave in his manners. A devoted son of his mother the Church, he was an uncompromising foe of Protestantism, which bore in his days the somewhat concealing name of Lollardism, but which his instincts as a Churchman taught him to regard as the one mortal enemy of that system, wherewith were bound up all dignities, titles, and happiness. He

³Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 63.

⁴Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 64.

⁵Bale, p. 92.

⁶Collier, vol. 1, p. 635.

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had experienced great diversity of fortune. He shared the exile of Henry Plantagenet, and he returned with him to assist in dethroning the man who had condemned and banished him as a traitor, and in elevating in his room Henry IV., whom he anointed with oil from the sacred vial which fell down from Mary out of heaven. He continued to be the evil genius of the king. His stronger will and more powerful intellect asserted an easy supremacy over Henry, who never felt quite sure of the ground on which he stood.

When at last the king was carried to Canterbury, and laid in marble, Arundel took his place by the side of his son, Henry V., and kept it during the first year of his reign. This prince was not naturally cruel, but Arundel's arrogant spirit and subtle counsel seduced him into paths of intolerance and blood. The stakes which the king and Arundel had planted were still blazing when the latter breathed his last, and was carried to lie beside his former master in Canterbury Cathedral. The martyrdoms which succeeded the Lollard assembly in St. Giles' Field, took place in January, 1414, and the archbishop died in the February following. "Yet died not," says Bale, "his prodigious tyranny with him, but succeeded with his office in Henry Chicheley."⁷

Before entering on any recital of the fortunes of English Protestantism under the new primate, let us pursue to a close the story of Sir John Oldcastle the good Lord Cobham, as the people called him. When he escaped from the Tower, the king offered a reward of 1,000 marks to any one who should bring him to him, dead or alive. Such, however, was the general estimation in which he was held, that no one claimed or coveted the price of blood. During four years Cobham remained undisturbed in his concealment among the mountains of the Welsh Principality. At length Lord Powis, prompted by avarice, or hatred of Lollardism, discovering his hiding-place, betrayed him to his pursuers. The brave old man was not to be taken without resistance.⁸ In the scuffle his leg was broken, and, thus maimed, he was laid upon a home-litter, carried to London, and consigned to his former abode in the Tower.⁹ The Parliament happened to be at that time sitting in London, and its records tell

⁷Bale, p. 95.

⁸Walsingham, p. 399.

⁹Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 645.

us the sequel. “On Tuesday, the 14th day of December (1417), and the 29th day of said Parliament, Sir John Oldcastle, of Cowling, in the county of Kent, knight [Lord Cobham], being outlawed (as is before mentioned) in the King’s Bench, and excommunicated before by the Archbishop of Canterbury for heresy, was brought before the Lords, and having heard his said convictions, answered not thereto in his excuse. Upon which record and process it was judged that he should be taken, as a traitor to the king and the realm; that he should be carried to the Tower of London, and from thence down through London, unto the new gallows in St. Giles without Temple Bar, and there be hanged, and burned hanging.”¹⁰

When the day came for the execution of this sentence, Lord Cobham was brought out, his hands pinioned behind his back, but his face lighted up with an air of cheerfulness.¹¹ By this time Lollardism had been made treason by Parliament, and the usual marks of ignominy which accompany the death of the traitor were, in Lord Cobham’s case, added to the punishment of which he was judged worthy as a heretic. He was placed on a hurdle, and drawn through the streets of London to St. Giles-in-the-Fields. On arriving at the place of execution he was assisted to alight, and, falling on his knees, he offered a prayer for the forgiveness of his enemies. He then stood up, and turning to the multitude, he exhorted them earnestly to follow the laws of God as written in the Scriptures; and especially to beware of those teachers whose immoral lives showed that neither had they the spirit of Christ nor loved his doctrine. A new gallows had been erected, and now began the horrible tragedy. Iron chains were put round his waist, he was raised aloft, suspended over the fire, and subjected to the double torture of hanging and burning. He maintained his constancy and joy amid his cruel sufferings; “consuming alive in the fire,” says Bale, “and praising the name

¹⁰Fox, bk. 5, p. 323. Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 645. Walsingham (p. 399) says that he ran out into a long address on the duty of man to forgive, and leave the punishment of offenses in the hands of the Almighty; and, on being stopped, and asked by the court to speak to the charge of outlawry, he began a second sermon on the same text. Walsingham has been followed in this by Collier, Cotton, and Lingard. “There is nothing more in the records,” says the younger M’Crie, speaking from a personal examination of them, “than a simple appeal to mercy.” (Ann. Eng. Presb., p. 54.)

¹¹Bale, p. 96.

of the Lord so long as his life lasted.” The priests and friars stood by the while, forbidding the people to pray for one who, as he was departing “not in the obedience of their Pope,” was about to be plunged into fiercer flames than those in which they beheld him consuming. The martyr, now near his end, lifting up his voice for the last time, commended his soul into the hands of God, and “so departed hence most Christianly.”¹² “Thus,” adds the chronicler, “rested this valiant Christian knight, Sir John Oldcastle, under the Altar of God, which is Jesus Christ; among that godly company [383] which, in the kingdom of patience, suffered great tribulation, with the death of their bodies, for his faithful word and testimony; abiding there with them the fulfilling of their whole number, and the full restoration of his elect.”¹³

“Chains, gallows, and fire,” as Bale remarks, are no pleasant things, and death by their means is not precious in the eyes of men; and yet some of the noblest spirits that have ever lived have endured

¹²Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 94. Bale, pp. 96, 97.

¹³Bale, pp. 98, 99. Fox, bk. 5, p. 323. The monks and friars who wrote our early plays, and acted our dumb shows, did not let slip the opportunity this gave them of vilifying, lampooning, and caricaturing the first English peer who had died a Protestant martyr. Having burned him, they never could forgive him. He was handed down, “from fair to fair, and from inn-yard to inn-yard,” as a braggart, a debauchee, and a poltroon. From them the martyr came to figure in the same character on Shakespeare’s stage. But the great dramatist came to discover how the matter really stood, and then he struck out the name “Oldcastle,” and inserted instead “Falstaff.” Not only so; as if he wished to make yet greater reparation for the injustice he had unwittingly done him, he proclaimed that Lord Cobham “died a martyr.” This indicates that Shakespeare himself had undergone some great change. “The point is curious,” says Mr. Hepworth Dixon. “It is not the change of a name, but of a state of mind. For Shakespeare is not content with striking out the name of Oldcastle and writing down that of Falstaff. He does more-much more-something beyond example in his works: he makes a confession of his faith. In his own person, as a poet and as a man, he proclaims from the stage, ‘Oldcastle died a martyr.’...Shakespeare changed his way of looking at the old heroes of English thought.” The play-The First Part of the True and Honourable History of the Life of Sir John Oldcastle, the Good Lord Cobham-is a protest against the wrong which had been done to Oldcastle on the stage. The prologue said- “It is no pampered glutton we present, Nor aged councillor to youthful sin; But one whose virtue shone above the rest, A valiant martyr and a virtuous peer.” “These lines,” says Mr. Dixon, “are thought to be Shakespeare’s own. They are in his vein, and they repeat the declaration which he had already made: ‘Oldcastle died a martyr!’” The man who wrote this confession in the days of Archbishop Whitgift was a Puritan in faith.” (Her Majesty’s Tower pp. 100-102; Lond., 1869.)

these thine - have worn the chain, mounted the gallows, stood at the stake; and in that ignominious guise, arrayed in the garb and enduring the doom of felons, have achieved victories, than which there are none grander or so fruitful in the records of the world. 'What better are we at this hour that Henry V. won Agincourt? To what purpose was that sea of blood - English and French - poured out on the plains of France? To set the trumpet of idle fame a-sounding? - to furnish matter for a ballad? - to blazon a page in history? That is about all when we reckon it up. But the blood of Cobham is yielding its fruits at this day. Had Sawtre, Badby, and Cobham been careful of their name, their honour, their lives; had they blushed to stand before tribunals which they knew were prepared to condemn them as traitors; had they declined to become a gazing-stock to mobs, who waited to scoff at and insult them as heretics; had they shrunk from the cruel torture and the bitter death of the stake - where would have been the Protestantism of England? and, without its Protestantism, where would have been its liberty? - still unborn. It was not the valor of Henry V., it was the grander heroism of Lord Cobham and his fellow-martyrs that awoke the soul of England, when it was sleeping a dead sleep, and fired it to pluck the bandage of a seven-fold darkness from its eyes, and to break the yoke of a seven-fold slavery from its neck. These are the stars that illuminate England's sky; the heroes whose exploits glorify her annals; the kings whose spirits rule from their thrones, which are their stakes, the hearts and souls of her noblest sons. The multitude lays its homage at the feet of those for whom the world has done much; whose path it has made smooth with riches; whose head it has lifted up with honors; and for whom, while living, it provided a stately palace; and when dead, a marble tomb. Let us go aside from the crowd: let us seek out, not the men for whom the world has done much, but the men who have done much for the world; and let us pay our homage, not indeed to them, but to Him who made them what they were. And where shall we find these men? In kings' houses? in schools and camps?-not oft. In jails, or at the bar of a tyrannical tribunal, or before a bench of Pharisees, or on a scaffold, around which mobs hoot, while the executioner stands by to do his office. These are not pleasant places; and yet it is precisely there that those great examples have been exhibited which have instructed

the world, and those mighty services rendered which have ennobled and blessed the race. It was amid such humiliations and sufferings that the Lollards sowed, all through the fifteenth century, the living seed, which the gracious spring-time of the sixteenth quickened into growth; which the following centuries, not unmingled with conflict and the blood of martyrdom, helped to ripen; and the fully matured harvest of which it remains for the generations to come to carry home.

Chapter 8: Lollardism under Henry V. and Henry VI.

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Thomas Arundel succeeded by Henry Chicheley—The New Primate pursues the Policy of his Predecessor—Parliament at Leicester—More Stringent Ordinances against the Lollards—Appropriation of Ecclesiastical Possessions—Archbishop Chicheley Staves off the Proposal—Diverts the King's Mind to a War with France—Speech of the Archbishop—Henry V. falls into the Snare—Prepares an Expedition—Invades France—Agincourt—Second Descent on France—Henry becomes Master of Normandy—Returns to England—Third Invasion of France—Henry's Death—Dying Protestation—His Magnificent Funeral—His Character—Lollardism—More Martyrs—Claydon—New Edict against the Lollards—Henry VI—Martyrs in his Reign—William Taylor—William White—John Huss—Recantations

Picture: Instruments of Torture

Picture: Henry V. and his Parliament (from the Harleian MSS. at the British Museum)

Picture: King Henry V.

Picture: Lollards making Abjuration of their Faith

The martyrdom of Lord Cobham has carried us a little way beyond the point to which we had come in tracing the footprints faint and intermittent- of Protestantism in England during the fifteenth century. We saw Arundel carried from the halls of Lambeth to be laid in the sepulchral vaults of Canterbury. His master, Henry IV., had preceded him to the grave by only a few months. More lately Sir Roger Acton and others had expired at the stake which Arundel's policy had planted for them; and, last of all, he went to render his own account to God.

Arundel was succeeded in the primacy by Henry Chicheley. Chicheley continued in the chair of St. Anselm the same policy

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which his predecessor had pursued. His predecessor's influence at court he did not wield, at least to the same extent, for neither was Chicheley so astute as Arundel, nor was Henry V. so facile as his father; but he inherited Arundel's hatred of Lollardism, and resolved to use all the powers of his high office for its suppression. The persecution, therefore, still went on. The "Constitutions of Arundel," passed in the previous reign, had spread the net so wide that scarcely was it possible for any one who had imbibed the opinions of John Wicliffe to avoid being caught in its meshes. Besides, under the reign of Henry V., new and more stringent ordinances were framed to oppress the Lollards. In a Parliament held at Leicester (1414), it was enacted "that whoever should read the Scriptures in English, which was then called 'Wicliffe's Learning,' should forfeit land, cattle, goods, and life, and be condemned as heretics to God, enemies to the crown, and traitors to the kingdom; that they should not have the benefit of any sanctuary, though this was a privilege then granted to the most notorious malefactors; and that, if they continued obstinate, or relapsed after pardon, they should first be hanged for treason against the king, and then burned for heresy against God." ¹

[386] While the Parliament stretched out one hand to persecute the Lollards, it put forth the other to despoil the clergy. Their wealth was enormous; but only the smallest fraction of it was given for the public service. The complaints on this head were growing louder every year. At this same Parliament of Leicester a storm was like to have burst out, had not the wit and policy of Henry Chicheley arrested the danger. The Commons reminded the king of the demand which had twice before been made in Parliament—first in Richard II.'s time (1394), and next in Henry IV.'s (1410)—relative to converting the lands and possessions of the clergy to the service of the State. "This bill," says Hall, "made the fat abbots to sweat; the proud priors to frown; the poor priors to curse; the silly nuns to weep; and indeed all her merchants to fear that Babel would down." Though Henry had lent the clergy his power to burn Lollards, they were far from sure that he might not be equally ready to lend the Parliament his authority to rob the Church. He was active, bold, fond of display, lavish in his habits; and the wealth of the hierarchy offered a ready

¹Bale, pp. 91, 92. Cobbett, vol. 1, pp. 323, 324.

and tempting means of maintaining his magnificence, which Henry might not have virtue to resist. They thought of binding the king to their interests by offering him a wealthy gift; but the wiser heads disapproved the policy: it would be accounted a bribe, and might be deemed scarce decent on the part of men in sacred office. The Archbishop of Canterbury hit on a more likely expedient, and one that fell in with the genius of the king, and the aspirations of the nation.

The most effectual course, said the archbishop, in a synod at London, of averting the impending storm, is to find the king some other business to employ his courage. We must turn his thoughts to war; we must rouse his ambition by reminding him of the crown of France, descended to him from Edward III. He must be urged to demand the French crown, as the undoubted heir; and if refused, he must attempt the recovery of it by arms. To cause these counsels to prevail, the clergy agreed to offer a great sum of money to defray the expenses of the war. They further resolved to give up all the alien priories² in the kingdom, to the number of 110, the lands of which would considerably increase the revenues of the crown.³

This policy, being approved by the synod at London, was vigorously advocated by the primate in the Parliament at Leicester. The archbishop, rising in the House, addressed the king as follows: - "You administer justice to your people with a noble equity; you are illustrious in the arts of a peaceful government: but the glory of a great king consists not so much in a reign of serenity and plenty, in great treasures, in magnificent palaces, in populous and fair cities, as in the enlargement of his dominions; especially when the assertion of his right calls him out to war, and justice, not ambition, authorizes all his conquests. Your Highness ought to wear the crown of France, by right descended to you from Edward III., your illustrious predecessor." The speaker went on, at great length, to trace the title, and

²These alien priories were most of them cells to monasteries in France. "'Twas argued," says Collier, "that these monks, being foreigners, and depending upon superiors in another kingdom, could not be true to the interest of the English nation: that their being planted here gave them an opportunity of maintaining correspondence with the enemy, besides their transporting money and other commodities was no ordinary damage." (Vol. 1, p. 650.)

³Bale, p. 91. Collier, vol. 1, p. 636. Fox, vol. 1, p. 775. Cobbet, vol. 1, p. 324.

to establish its validity, to the satisfaction, doubtless, of the audience which he addressed; and he wound up his oration by a reference to the unprecedentedly large sum which the liberality of the clergy had placed at the service of the king, to enable him to make good his title to the crown of France.

The primate added, "Since therefore your right to the realm of France is so clear and unquestionable; since 'tis supported by the laws both of God and man; 'tis now your Highness' part to assert your title, to pull the crown from the heads of the French usurpers, and to pursue the revolt of that nation with fire and sword. 'Tis your Highness' interest to maintain the ancient honour of the English nation, and not, by a tame overlooking of injurious treatment, give your posterity an occasion to reproach your memory."⁴ No one present whispered into the speaker's ear the conjuration which our great national poet puts into the mouth of King Henry-

"God doth know how many, now in health,
 Shall drop their blood in approbation
 Of what your reverence shall incite us to:
 Therefore take heed how you impawn our person;
 How you awake the sleeping sword of war:
 We charge you, in the name of God, take heed;
 For never two such kingdoms did contend
 Without much fall of blood; whose guiltless drops
 Are every one a woe, a sore complaint,
 'Gainst him whose wrongs give edge unto the swords
 That make such waste in brief mortality."⁵
 The project met with the approval of the king.

[387] To place the fair realm of France under his sceptre; to unite it with England and Scotland-for the king's uncle, the Duke of Exeter, suggested that he who would conquer Scotland must begin with France-in one monarchy; to transfer, in due time, the seat of government to Paris, and make his throne the first in Christendom, was an enterprise grand enough to fire the spirit of a monarch less ambitious and valorous than Henry V. Instantly the king set about

⁴Collier, vol. 1, p. 638.

⁵Shakspeare, Henry V., act 1.

making preparations on a vast scale. Soldiers were levied from all parts of England; ships were hired from Holland and Flanders for the transport of men and ammunition. Money, provisions, horses, carriages, tents, boats covered with skins for crossing rivers—everything, in fine, requisite for the success of such an enterprise was provided; and the expedition was now ready to be launched.

But before striking the blow a feint was made at negotiation with France. This was conducted by Archbishop Chicheley, the very man with whom war was a foregone conclusion; and, as might have been foreseen, the attempts at conciliation came to nothing, and hostilities were now commenced. The king, crossing the Channel with an army of 30,000 men, landed on the coast of France.⁶ Towns were besieged and taken; battles were fought; but sickness setting in among the soldiers, and winter coming on, the king deemed it advisable, in order to preserve the remnant of his army, to retreat to Calais for winter quarters. On his march he encountered the French host, which four times outnumbered his own, now reduced to 10,000. He had to fight the terrible battle of Agincourt. He conquered on this bloody field, on which, stretched out in death, lay the flower of the French nobility. Leaving the vultures to give them burial, Henry resumed his march, and held on his way to England,⁷ where, tidings of his victory having preceded him, he was welcomed with acclamations. Archbishop Chicheley had succeeded in diverting the mind of the king and Parliament from their projected attempt on the possessions of the clergy; but at what a price!

Neither England nor France had yet seen the end of this sad and very sanguinary affair. The English king, now on fire, was not the man to let the enterprise drop half achieved; and the policy of the primate was destined to develop into yet other tragedies, and yet more oceans of French and English blood. Henry made a second descent upon France (1417), the mutual hate and fierce contentions of the French factions opening the gates of the kingdom for his entrance. He passed on through the land, marking in blood the line of his march. Towns besieged, provinces wasted, and their inhabitants subjected to the horrors of famine, of rapine and slaughter, were

⁶Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 68.

⁷Ibid., pp. 79-83. Collier, vol. 1., p. 641. Hume, chap. 20.

the scenes which presented themselves around his steps. He made himself master of Normandy, married the king's youngest daughter, and after a time returned once more to his own land. ⁸

Soon affairs called King Henry again to France. This time he made a public entry into Paris, accompanied by his queen, Catherine, ⁹ on purpose to show the Parisians their future sovereign. France was no nearer recognising his alleged right to reign over it; and Henry began, as before, to besiege its towns and slaughter its children, in order to compel a submission which it was clear would not be voluntarily given. He was thus occupied when an event took place which put an end to his enterprise for ever; he felt that the hand of death was upon him, and he retired from Cosne, which he was besieging, to Vincennes, near Paris. The Dukes of Bedford and Gloucester, and the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick, when his end approached, came to his bedside to receive his instructions. He addressed them, protesting that "neither the ambitious desire of enlarging his dominions, nor of winning vain renown and worldly fame, had moved him to engage in these wars, but only the prosecution of his just title; that he might in the end attain to a perfect peace, and come to enjoy those parts of his inheritance which to him of right belonged; and that, before the beginning of the same wars, he was fully persuaded by men both wise and of great holiness of life, that upon such intent he might and ought both begin the same wars, and follow them till he had brought them to an end justly and rightly, and that without all danger of God's displeasure or peril of soul." ¹⁰ After making a few necessary arrangements respecting the government of England and France, he recited the seven penitential psalms, received the Sacrament, and so he died, August 31st, 1422.

[388] The magnificence of his funeral is thus described by the chronicler: - "His body, embalmed and enclosed in lead, was laid in a chariot royal, richly apparelled with cloth of gold. Upon his coffin was laid a representation of his person, adorned with robes, diadem, scepter, and ball, like a king; the which chariot six horses drew,

⁸Holinshed, vol. 3, pp. 90-114. Cobbett, vol. 1, col. 338.

⁹This is that Catherine who, after the death of her husband, Henry V., married Sir Owen Tudor, a Welsh gentleman, whose descendants afterwards mounted the throne of England.

¹⁰Holinshed, vol. 3, pp. 132, 133.

richly trapped, with several appointments: the first with the arms of St. George, the second with the arms of Normandy, the third of King Arthur, the fourth of St. Edward, the fifth of France, and the sixth with the arms of England and France. On this same chariot gave attendance James, King of Scots, the principal mourner; King Henry's uncle, Thomas, Duke of Exeter; Richard, Earl of Warwick;" and nine other lords and knights. Other lords carried banners and standards. "The hatchments were carried only by captains, to the number of twelve; and round about the chariot rode 500 men-at-arms, all in black armor, their horses barbed black, and they with the butt-ends of their spears upwards.

"The conduct of this dolorous funeral was committed to Sir William Philip, Treasurer of the King's household, and to Sir William Porter, his chief carver, and others. Besides this, on every side of his chariot went 300 persons, holding long torches, and lords bearing banners, bannerds, and pennons. With this funeral appointment was he conveyed from Bets de Vincennes to Paris, and so to Rouen, to Abbeville, to Calais, to Dover; from thence through London to Westminster, where he was interred with such solemn ceremonies, mourning of lords, prayer of priests, and such lamenting of commons, as never before then the like was seen in England,"¹¹ Tapers were kept burning day and night on his tomb, till the Reformation came to put them out.

Henry V. had not a few great qualities which, in other circumstances, would have enabled him to render services of great value and lasting benefit to his nation. His strength of character was attested by his conquest over his youthful passions and habits when he came to the throne. He was gentle in disposition, frank in manners, and courageous in spirit, he was a lover of justice, and showed a desire to have it purely administered. He ate temperately, passed but few hours in bed, and in field exercises displayed the strength of an athlete. His good sense made him valuable in council; but it was in marshalling an army for battle that his genius especially shone. Had these talents and energies been exercised at home, what blessings might they not have conferred upon his subjects? But the fatal counsel of the archbishop and the clergy diverted them all into

¹¹Holmshed, vol 3, p. 134.

a channel in which they were productive of terrible mischiefs to the country of which he was the rightful lord, and to that other which he aspired to rule, but the crown of which riot all his valor and toil were able to place upon his head. He went down into the grave in the flower of his age, in the very prime of his manhood, after a reign of ten years, "and all his mighty projects vanished into smoke."¹² He left his throne to his son, an infant only a few months old, bequeathing to him along with the crown a legacy of complications at home and wars abroad, for which a "hundred Agincourts" would not have compensated. This episode of Henry and his wars with France belongs to the history of Protestantism, springing as it does directly out of the policy which was framed for arresting it.

While these armaments and battles were going forward, how fared it, we return to ask, with the new opinions and their disciples in England? Did these great storms root out, or did they shelter, the seed which Wicliffe had sowed, and which the blood of the martyrs who came after him had watered and caused to spring up? They were a protection, we are disposed to think, on the whole, to the infant Protestantism of England. Its adherents were a humble, unorganised company of men, who shunned rather than courted observation. Still we trace their presence in the nation, as we light, in the ecclesiastical records of their age, at brief intervals of time, upon a stake, and a Lollard sealing his testimony thereat.

On August 17, 1415, John Claydon, a currier in London, was brought before Henry, Archbishop of Canterbury. In former years, Claydon had been in the prison of the Fleet on a charge of heresy. He was set free on abjuring his opinions. On this his second apprehension, he boldly confessed the faith he had denied aforetime. One of the main charges against him was his having in his house many books written in English, and in especial one book, called the *Lanthorn of Light*. This book was produced against him by the Mayor of London, who had taken possession of it, along with others, when he apprehended him. It was bound in red leather, written on parchment, in a good English hand, and Claydon confessed that it had been made at his own cost and charges, and that he often read in it, for he found it "good and healthful for his soul." The mayor

¹²Hume, chap. 19.

said that the books he found in the house of Claydon “were, in his judgment, the worst and most perverse he ever did read or see.” He was sentenced as a relapsed heretic, and delivered to the secular power. Committed to the fire at Smithfield, “he was there meekly,” says Fox, “made a burnt-offering to the Lord.” He is said by some to have had a companion at the stake, George Gurmyn, with whom, as it came out on his examination, he had often communed about the matters of their common faith. ¹³

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The year after the martyrdom of Claydon, the growth of Lollardism was borne testimony to by Archbishop Chicheley, in a new edict which he issued, in addition to those that his predecessor, Arundel, had enacted. The archbishop’s edict had been preceded by the Act of Parliament, passed in 1414, soon after the midnight meeting at St. Giles-in-the-Fields, which made it one and the same thing to be a Lollard and to be a traitor. The preamble of the Act of Parliament set forth that “there had been great congregations and insurrections, as well by them of the sect of heresy commonly called Lollardy, as by others of their confederacy, to the intent to annul, destroy, and subvert the Christian faith, and also to destroy our Sovereign Lord the King, and all other manner of Estates of the Realm of England, as well spiritual as temporal, and also all manner of policy, and finally the laws of the land.” These simple men, who read the Scriptures, believed what they taught, and assembled in secret places to worship God, are painted in the Act as the most dangerous of conspirators—as men aiming at the destruction of society itself, and so are to be hunted out and exterminated. Accordingly, the Act goes on to enjoin that all judges, justices, and magistrates shall take an oath to make inquisition for Lollards, and that they shall issue warrants for their apprehension, and delivery to the ecclesiastical judges, that they may “be acquit or convict by the laws of holy Church.” ¹⁴

This paved the way for the edict of the primate, which enjoined on his suffragan bishops and their commissaries a similar pursuit of heretics and heresy. In pointing out whom he would have apprehended, the archbishop undesignedly gives us the true character of the men whom Parliament had branded as conspirators, busy

¹³Fox, bk. 5, pp. 319, 320.

¹⁴Collier, vol. 1, p. 639.

plotting the destruction of the Christian religion, and the entire subversion and ruin of the commonwealth of England. And who are they? Men of immoral life, who prowl about with arms in their hands, and make themselves, by their lawless and violent courses, the terror of the neighborhood in which they live? No. The men on whose track the primate sets his inquisitors are the men who “frequent conventicles, or else differ in life and manners from the common conversation of other Catholic men, or else that hold any either heresies or errors, or else that have any suspected books in the English tongue” - “Wicliffe’s learning” for example-in short, “those heretics who, like foxes, lurk and hide themselves in the Lord’s vineyard.” The personal search of the bishop and archdeacon, or their commissaries, was not, the archbishop judged, enough; they were to supplement their own diligence by calling to their aid certain of the “honestest men, to take their oath upon the holy evangelists, that if they shall know or understand any such” they should report them “to our suffragans, or archdeacons, or to their commissaries.”¹⁵

These edicts raise the curtain, and show us how numerous were the followers of Wicliffe in England in the fifteenth century, and how deep his teaching had gone into the hearts of the English people. It is only the choice spirits of the party who come into view at the stake. The greater part hid their Lollardism under the veil of an outward conformity, or of an almost entire seclusion from the world; or, if apprehended on a charge of heresy, they quailed before the terrible alternative offered them, and preferred submission to the Church to burning. We may be permitted to draw a covering over their weakness, and to pass on to those whose stronger faith doomed them indeed to the fire, but won for them a place by the side of the ancient “worthies” on the great roll of renown.¹⁶

[390] The first martyr under Henry VI. was William Taylor. He was a priest of the province of Canterbury. Accused of heresy before Archbishop Arundel, he abjured, and appeared at Lambeth to receive absolution at the hands of the primate. “Laying aside his cloak, his cap, and stripped to his doublet, he kneeled at the feet

¹⁵Fox, bk. 5, pp. 320, 321.

¹⁶Hebrews 11.

of the archbishop, who then, standing up, and having a rod in his hand, began the ‘Miserere.’”¹⁷ The prescribed forms of penance having been duly gone through, Taylor received absolution. In 1419 he was again charged with heretical teaching, and brought before Archbishop Chicheley. On a profession of penitence, he was let free on bail. Little more than a year only elapsed when he was a third time arraigned. Twice had he fallen; but he will not be guilty of a third relapse. Refusing to abjure, he was delivered to the secular power, a form of words consigning him to burning in Smithfield.

Before being led to the stake he was degraded. He was deprived of priesthood by taking from him the chalice and paten; of deaconship, by taking from him the gospel-book and tunicle; of sub-deaconship, by taking from him the epistle-book and tunicle; of acolyteship, by taking from him the cruet and candlestick; of the office of exorcist, by taking from him the book of exorcisms or gradual; of sextonship, by taking from him the church-door key and surplice. On the 1st of March, 1422, after long imprisonment, he was brought to Smithfield, and there, “with Christian constancy, consumated his martyrdom.”¹⁸

Two years afterwards (1424), William White, a priest, whose many virtues and continual labours had won him the esteem of all good men in Norfolk, was burned at Norwich. He had previously renounced his priesthood, married, and become a Lollard evangelist. In 1424 he was attached at Canterbury for the following articles: 1. That men should seek for the forgiveness of their sins only at the hand of God. 2. That men ought not to worship images and other idolatrous painting. 3. That men ought not to worship the holy men who are dead. 4. That the Romish Church is the fig-tree which the Lord Jesus Christ hath accursed, seeing it hath brought forth no fruit of the true belief. 5. That such as wear cowls, or be anointed or shorn, are the lance-knights or soldiers of Lucifer, and that they all, because their lamps are not burning, shall be shut out when the Lord shall come.

At Canterbury he “lost courage and strength,” and abjured. But “afterwards,” says the martyrologist, “he became much stouter and

¹⁷Fox, bk. 6, p. 339.

¹⁸Holinshed, 3, p. 135. Collier, 7, p. 650. Fox, p. 339.

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stronger in Jesus Christ, and confessed his error and offense.” He exerted himself more zealously than ever in writing and preaching. At last he was apprehended, and, being convicted of thirty articles, he was condemned by the Bishop of Nextrich to be burned.¹⁹ As he stood at the stake, he essayed to speak to the people, and to exhort them to steadfastness in the doctrine which he had taught them; but a servant of the bishop struck him on the mouth, and forced him to keep silence. The utterance of the tongue might be suppressed, but the eloquence of his death it was impossible to suppress. In 1430, William Hoveden, a wool-spinner and citizen of London, having imbibed the opinions of Wicliffe, “could by no means be plucked back,” says Fox, “and was burned hard by the Tower of London.” In 1431, Thomas Bagley, Vicar of Monenden, near Malden, “a valiant disciple and adherent of Wicliffe,” was condemned for heresy, and burned in Smithfield.

Only one other martyr of the’ fifteenth century shall we name—John Huss; “for England,” says Fox, “has also its John Huss as well as Bohemia.” Being condemned, he was delivered to one of the sheriffs to see him burned in the afternoon. The sheriff, being a merciful man, took him to his own house, and began to exhort him to renounce his errors. The confessor thanked him, but intimated that he was well assured of that for which he was about to die: one thing, however, would he beg of him—a little food, for he was hungry and faint. His wish was gladly complied with, and the martyr sat down and dined composedly, remarking to those that stood by that “he had made a good and competent meal, seeing he should pass through a sharp shower ere he went to supper.” Having given thanks, he rose from table, and requested that he might shortly be led to the place where he should yield up his spirit unto God.

“It is to be noted,” says Fox, “that since the time of King Richard II., there is no reign of any king in which some good man or other has not suffered the pains of fire for the religion and true testimony of Christ Jesus.”²⁰

It were truly tedious to relate the number of apprehensions and trials for heresy that took place in those days. No spectacle was then

¹⁹Fox, bk. 6, p. 341

²⁰Ibid, p. 361.

more common than that of men and women, at church doors and market crosses, in a garb meant to humiliate and degrade them, their feet and limbs naked, their head bare, with tapers in their hands, making abjuration of their Protestantism. “Within the space of three or four years,” says Fox, “that is from 1428 to 1431, about the number of 120 men and women were cast into prison, and sustained great vexation for the profession of the Christian faith, in the dioceses of Norfolk and Suffolk.”²¹ These were the proofs at once of their numbers and their weakness; and for the latter the martyrologist thus finely pleads their excuse: “These soldiers of Christ,” says he, “being much beaten with the cares and troubles of those days, were constrained to protest otherwise with their tongues than their hearts did think, partly through correction and partly through infirmity, being as yet but new-trained soldiers in God’s field.”²² These confessors attained not the first rank, yet were they soldiers in the army of the Reformed faith, and contributed their moiety of help towards that great victory which ultimately crowned their cause, and the fruits of which we are reaping at this day.

²¹Ibid, p. 340 ²²Ibid, p. 340

²²Ibid, p. 340

Chapter 9: Rome's Attempt to Regain Dominancy in England

Henry VI—His Infancy—Distractions of the Nation—The Romish Church becomes more Intolerant—New Festival—St. Dunstan's and St. George's Days—Indulgences at the Shrine of St. Edmund, etc—Fresh Attempts by Rome to Regain Dominancy in England—What Led to these—Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire Denounced—Archbishop Chicheley Reprimanded for Permitting these Statutes to Exist—The Pope's Letter

Picture: View of Canterbury

Henry V., overtaken by death in the midst of his wars in a foreign land, left his throne, as we have seen, to his son, then only a few months old. England now experienced, in amplest measure, the woe predicted of the land whose king is a child. During the long minority, many evil fruits grew out of the counsel tendered to the king by the clergy. If ever a country needed a firm will and a strong hand, it was England at the era that saw this infant placed on its throne. There were factions to be repressed; turbulent nobles to be curbed; conspirators, though the Lollards were not of the number, to be hunted out and punished; and, above all, there was the rising spirit of reform to be guided into the channel of peaceful progress, that so it might rectify institutions without destroying them. But the power, the enlightenment, and the patriotism necessary for this were lacking, and all these elements of conflict, unregulated and uncontrolled, broke out, and strove together in the now distracted and miserable country.

The natural tendency of corruptions, when first approached by the pruning-knife, is to strengthen themselves—to shoot up in new and ranker luxuriance—the better to resist the attacking forces. So was it with the Church of Rome at this era in England. On the one side Lollardism had begun to question the truth of its doctrines, on the other the lay power was assailing the utility of its vast possessions,

and the Roman hierarchy, which had not made up its mind to yield to the call for reformation now addressed to it, had no alternative but to fortify itself against both the Lollards without and the cry for reform within. It became instantly more exacting in its homage and more stringent in its beliefs. Aforetime a very considerable measure of freedom had been allowed to friend and foe on both points. If one was disposed to be witty, or satirical, or humorous at the expense of the Church or her servants, he might be so without running any great risk of being branded as a heretic. Witness the stinging diatribes and biting satires of Petrarch, written, we may say, under the very roof of the Popes at Avignon. But now the wind set in from another quarter, and if one spoke irreverently of saint, or indulged in a quiet laugh at monk, or hinted a doubt of any miracle or mystery of "Holy Church," he drew upon himself the suspicion of heresy, and was fortunate indeed if he escaped the penalties thereto annexed. Some there were who aimed only at being wits, who found to their dismay that they were near becoming martyrs.

Protestantism, which has only one object of worship, has only one great Festival—that DAY which stands in majesty unapproachable among the other days. But the fetes and festivals of Rome crowded the calendar, and if more should be added to the list, it would be almost necessary that more days should be added to the year. Yet now there came a great addition to these days of unholy idleness. The previous century had entrenched the Romish ceremonial with "All Souls," the "Conception of the Blessed Virgin," and "Corpus Christi." To these Boniface IX. had added the Salutation of Mary and Elizabeth, "cram-full of indulgences," as Walsingham says, for those who should duly honour the feast. Treading in the footsteps of the Pontiff, although at a becoming distance, Archbishop Arundel contributed his share to this department of the nation's piety by raising, *cum permissu*, St. Dunstan's and St. George's days to the rank of the greater festivals. Next came the monks of Bury in this pious work of enriching England with sacred days and holy places. They procured special indulgences for the shrine of St. Edmund. Nor were the monks of Ely and Norwich behind their brethren of Bury. They were enabled to offer full absolution to all who should come and confess themselves in their churches in Trinity week. Even the bloody field of Agincourt was made to do its part in augmenting

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the nation's spiritual wealth: from October 25th, this day began to be observed as a greater festival. And, not to multiply instances, the canons of St. Bartholomew, hard by Smithfield, where the fires of martyrdom were blazing, were diligently exercising their new privilege of pardoning all sorts of persons all manner of sins, one sin only excepted, the unpardonable one of heresy. The staple of the trade now being so industriously driven was pardon; the material cost nothing, the demand was extensive, the price was good, and the profits were correspondingly large. This multiplication of festivals was Rome's remedy for the growing irreverence of the age. It was the only means she knew of heightening the spirit of devotion among her members, and strengthening the national religion.

It was at this time that Pope Martin V., of the haughty house of Colonna, who was elevated to the Papal chair by the Council of Constance, which place he soon thereafter left for Rome in a blaze of magnificence,¹ turned his eyes on England, thinking to put it as completely under his feet as it had been under those of Innocent III., in the days of King John. The statutes of Provisors and Praemunire, passed in the reigns of Edward III. and Richard II., were heavy blows to the Papal power in England. The Popes had never acquiesced in this state of matters, nor relinquished the hope of being able to compel Parliament to cancel these "execrable statutes." But the calamities of the Popedom, and more especially the schism, which lasted forty years, delayed the prosecution of the fixed determination of the Papal See. Now, however, the schism was healed, a prince, immature in years and weak in mind, occupied the throne of England, the nation had a war with France upon its hands, factions and conspiracies were weakening the country at home, and success was ceasing to gild its arms abroad, and so the Pope thought the time ripe for advancing anew his claim for supremacy over England. His demand was, in short, that the statutes of Provisors and Praemunire, which had shut out his briefs and bulls, his bishops and legates, and had cut off the outflow of English gold, so much prized at Rome, should be repealed.

This request Pope Martin did not send directly to the king or the regent. The Vatican in such cases commonly acts through its

¹See ante, bk. 3, chap. 13.

spiritual machinery. In the first place, the Pontiff is too exalted above other monarchs to make suit in person to them; and in the second place, he is too politic to do so. It lessens the humiliation of a rebuff that it be given to the servant and not the master. Pope Martin wrote to Archbishop Chicheley, frowning right pontifically upon him for a state of things which Chicheley could no more prevent than Martin himself could. ²

“Martin, Bishop, servant of the servants of God,” began the Pontiff-it is the usual Papal phraseology, especially when some arrogant demand is to follow- to his reverend brother, the Archbishop of Canterbury, greeting, and apostolic benediction.” So far well, but the sweetness exhales in the first sentence; the brotherly kindness of Papal benediction is soon exhausted, and then comes the Papal displeasure. Pope Martin goes on to accuse his “reverend brother” of forgetting what “a strict account he had to give to Almighty God of the flock committed to his care.” He upbraids him as “sleepy and negligent,” otherwise he would have opposed to the utmost of his power “those who had made a sacrilegious invasion upon the privileges settled by our Savior upon the Roman Church”-the statutes of Provisors and Praemunire, to wit. While Archbishop Chicheley was slumbering, “his flock, alas!” the Pope tells him, “were running down a precipice before his face.” The flock in the act of hurling themselves over a precipice are seen, in the next sentence, feeding

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²We may here quote the statute of Praemunire, as passed in the 16th of Richard II. After a preambulatory remonstrance against the encroachments of the Pope in the way of translating English prelates to other sees in England, or in foreign countries, in appointing foreigners to English sees, and in sending his bulls of excommunication against bishops refusing to carry into effect his appointments, and in withdrawing persons, causes, and revenues from the jurisdiction of the king, and after the engagement of the Three Estates to stand by the crown against these assumptions of the Pope, the enacting part of the statute follows: - “Whereupon our said Lord the King, by the assent aforesaid, and at the request of his said Commons, hath ordained and established, that if any purchase or pursue, or cause to be purchased or pursued, in the court of Rome or elsewhere [the Papal court was at times at Avignon], any such translations, processes, or sentences of excommunication, bulls, instruments, or any other things whatsoever, which touch the King, against him, his crown, or his regalty, or his realm as is aforesaid; and they which bring within the realm, or them receive, or make thereof notification, or any other execution whatsoever within the same realm, or without, that they, their notaries, procurators, maintainers, abettors, ranters, and counsellors, shall be put out of the King’s protection, and their lands and tenements, goods and chattels, forfeit to our Lord the

quietly beside their shepherd; for the Pope immediately continues, “You suffer them to feed upon dangerous plants, without warning; and, which is horribly surprising, you seem to put poison in their mouths with your own hands.” He had forgotten that Archbishop Chicheley’s hands were at that moment folded in sleep, and that he was now uttering a cry to awaken him. But again the scene suddenly shifts, and the Papal pencil displays a new picture to our bewildered sight; for, adds the writer, “you can look on and see the wolves scatter and pull them in pieces, and, like a dumb dog, not so much as bark upon the occasion.”

After the rhetoric comes a little business. “What abominable violence has been let loose upon your province, I leave it to yourself to consider. Pray peruse that royal law” the Pope now comes to the point-” if there is anything that is either law or royal belonging to it. For how can that be called a statute which repeals the laws of God and the Church? I desire to know, reverend brother, whether you, who are a Catholic bishop, can think it reasonable such an Act as this should be in force in a Christian country?”

Not content with having exhibited the statute of *Praemunire* under the three similitudes of a “precipice,” “poison,” and “wolves,” Pope Martin goes on thus:-“Under color of this execrable statute, the King of England reaches into the spiritual jurisdiction, and governs so fully in ecclesiastical matters, as if our Savior had constituted him His Vicar. He makes laws for the Church, as if the keys of the kingdom of heaven were put into his hands.

“Besides this hideous encroachment, he has enacted,” continues the Pope, “several terrible penalties against the clergy.” This “rigor,” worse, the Pope calls it, than any to which “Jew” or “Turk” was subjected, was the exclusion from the kingdom of those Italians and others whom the Pope had nominated to English livings without the king’s consent, and in defiance of the statute. “Was ever,” asks the Pope, “such iniquity as this passed into a law? Can that be styled a Catholic kingdom where such profane laws are made and practised? where St. Peter’s successor is not allowed to execute our Savior’s commission? For this Act will not allow St. Peter’s See to proceed in the functions of government, nor make provisions suitable to the necessities of the Church.”

“Is this,” asks the Pope, in fine, “a Catholic statute, or can it be endured without dishonor to our Savior, without a breach upon the laws of the Gospel, and the ruin of people’s souls? Why, therefore, did you not cry aloud? why did you not lift up your voice like a trumpet? Show your people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins, that their blood may not be required at your hands.”

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Such were the terms in which Pope Martin deemed it becoming to speak of the Act by which the Parliament prohibited foreigners—many of whom did not know our tongue, and some of whom, too lazy to come in person, sent their cooks or butlers to do duty for them—holding livings in England. He rates the Senate of a great nation as if it were a chapter of friars or a corps of Papal pensioners, who dared not meet till he had given them leave, nor transact the least piece of business till they had first ascertained whether it was agreeable to his Pontifical pleasure. And the primate, the very man who at that moment was enacting new edicts against heresy, deeming the old not severe enough, and was burning Lollards for the “greater glory” of the Church, he indecently scolds as grossly and traitorously negligent of the interests of the Papal See. This sharp reprimand was followed by an order to the archbishop, under pain of excommunication, instantly to repair to the Privy Council, and exert his utmost influence to have the statute repealed; and he was further enjoined, as soon as Parliament should sit, to apply to it for the same purpose, and

614 to tell the Lords and Commons of England from the Pope, “that all who obeyed that statute were under excommunication.” The primate was further required to charge all the clergy to preach the same doctrine. And, lastly, he was ordered to take two grave personages with him to attest his diligence, and to certify the Pope of the result of the matter. ⁴

³Collier, vol. 1, pp. 653, 654.

⁴Ibid., p. 654.

Chapter 10: Resistance to Papal Encroachments

Embroidment of the Papacy—Why Angry with Archbishop Chicheley—A Former Offence—Advises the King not to Receive a Legate-a-Latere- Powers of the Legate—Promise exacted of Legate Beaufort—Pope’s Displeasure—Holds the Statutes Void—Commands the Archbishop to Disobey them—Pope’s Letter to Duke of Bedford—Chicheley advises Parliament to Repeal the Act—Parliament Refuses—The Pope resumes his Encroachments—Two Currents in England in the Fifteenth Century—Both Radically Protestant—The Evangelic Principle the Master-spring of all Activities then beginning in Society

Picture: Preaching at St. Pauls Cross in the Fifteenth Century

[397] Why this explosion of Papal wrath against the Primate of England? Why this torrent of abusive epithets and violent accusations? Even granting the Act of Praemunire to have been the atrociously wicked thing the Pope held it to be—the very acme of rebellion against God, against St. Peter, and against one whom the Pope seemed to think greater than either-himself- could Archbishop Chicheley have prevented the passing of it? It was passed before his time. And why, we may ask, was this tempest reserved for the head of Archbishop Chicheley? Why was not the See of Canterbury taxed with cowardice and prevarication before now? Why were not Courtney and Arundel reprimanded upon the same score? Why had the Pope held his peace till this time? The flock in England for half a century had been suffering the treble scourge of being driven over a precipice, of being poisoned, and of being torn by wolves, and yet the Pontiff had not broken silence or uttered a cry of warning all that time. The chief shepherd had been slumbering as well as the under-shepherd, and ought first to have made confession of his own faults before so sharply calling others to a reckoning for theirs. Why was this?

We have already hinted at the reasons. The affairs of the Papal See were in great confusion. The schism was in its vigor. There

were at times three claimants of St. Peter's chair. While matters were so embroiled, it would have been the height of imprudence to have ruffled the English bishops; it might have sent them over to a rival interest. But now Martin had borne down all competitors, he had climbed to the sole occupancy of the Papal throne, and he will let both the English Parliament and the English Primate know that he is Pope.

But Chicheley had offended in another point, and though the Pope does not mention it, it is possible that it wounded his pride just as deeply as the other. The archbishop, in his first Convocation, moved the annulling of Papal exemptions in favor of those under age. "This he did," says Walsingham, "to show his spirit."¹ This was an act of boldness which the court of Rome was not likely to pardon. But, further, the archbishop brought himself into yet deeper disfavor by counselling Henry V. to refuse admission to the Bishop of Winchester² as legate-a-latere. The Pope could not but deem this a special affront. Chicheley showed the king that "this commission of legate-a-latere might prove of dangerous consequence to the realm; that it appeared from history and ancient records that no legates-a-latere had been sent into England unless upon very great occasions; that before they were admitted they were brought under articles, and limited in the exercise of their character. Their commission likewise determined within a year at farthest, whereas the Bishop of Winchester's was granted for life."³

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Still further to convince the king of the danger of freely admitting such a functionary, he showed from canon law the vast jurisdiction with which he was vested; that from the moment the legate entered, he, Henry, would be but half a king; that the legate-a-latere was the Pope in all but the name; that he would bring with him the Pope's

¹"Ut manifestaret bilem suam"-his bile or choler. The word chosen shows that the chronicler did not quite approve of such a display of independence. (Walsingham, p. 387.)

²This was the same Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester-a son of John of Gaunt-to whom the Pope gave a commission to raise a new crusade against the Bohemians. In this way the Pope hoped, doubtless, to draw in the English to take part in those expeditions which had already cost the German nations so much treasure and blood. In fact the legate came empowered by the Pope to levy a tax of a tenth upon the English clergy for the war in Bohemia. This, however, was refused. (Collier, vol. 1, p. 658.) See ante, bk. 3, chap. 17.

³Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 655.

power in all but its plenitude; that the chair of the legate would eclipse the throne of the king; that the courts of the legate would override the courts of Westminster Hall; that the legate would assume the administration of all the Church property in the kingdom; that he would claim the right of adjudicating upon all causes in which, by any pretext, it could be made appear that the Church had interest; in short, that the legate-a-latere would, divide the allegiance of the subjects between the English crown and the Roman tiara, reserving the lion's share to his master.

Henry V. was not the man to fill the place of lieutenant while another was master in his kingdom. Winchester had to give way; as the representative of Rome's majesty the Pope's other self-he must not tread the English sod while Henry lived. But in the next reign, after a visit to Rome, the bishop returned in the full investiture of the legatine power (1428). He intimated his commission to the young king and the Duke of Gloucester, who was regent, but he did not find the way so smooth as he hoped. Richard Caudray, being named the king's deputy, met him with a protest in form, that no legate from the Pope could enter the realm without the king's consent, that the kings of England had long enjoyed this privilege, and that if Winchester intended to stretch his legatine authority to the breach of this ancient custom, and enter of his own right, it was at his peril. The cardinal, finding the king firm, gave his solemn promise that he would do nothing to the prejudice of the prerogatives of the crown, and the rights and privileges of the kingdom. ⁴ The spirited and patriotic conduct of Archbishop Chicheley, in advising that the legate-a-latere should not be recognised, was the more honorable to him inasmuch as the man who in this case bore the legatine commission was an Englishman, and of the blood royal. It was rare indeed that any but an Italian was appointed to an office that came so near equality, in its influence and dignity, with the Papal chair itself. ⁵

⁴Duck, in Vit. Chicheley, p. 37; apud. Collier, vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 657.

⁵In the petition given in to Henry VI. by the Duke of Gloucester (1441) against the Cardinal of Winchester, legate-a-latere, we find the duke saying, "My lord, your father would as leif see him set his crown beside him as see him wear a cardinal's hat.... His intent was never todo so great derogation to the Church of Canterbury, as to make them that were his suffragans sit above their ordinary and metropolitan....Item, it is not unknown to you, how through your lands it is noised that the said cardinal and the Archbishop of

The primate's conduct in the matter was, doubtless, reported at Rome. It must have been specially offensive to a court which held it as a maxim that to love one's country is to hate one's Church. But the Vatican could not show its displeasure or venture on resenting the indignity while the warlike Henry V. occupied the throne. Now, however, the silent aisles of Westminster had received him. The offense was remembered, and the kingdom from whom it had come must be taught how heinous it is to humiliate the See of Rome, or encroach upon the regalities of St. Peter. The affair of the legate-a-latere was but one in a long series of affronts. To avenge it was not enough; the Pope must go further back and deeper down, and get at the root of that spirit of rebellion which had actuated England from the days of Edward III., and which had come to a head in the Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire. ⁶

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We have seen the primate commanded to go to the Privy Council, and also to Parliament, and demand the repeal of these statutes. Excommunication was to be the penalty of refusal. But the Pope went further. In virtue of his own supremacy he made void these laws. He wrote to the Archbishops of York and Canterbury-for the Pope names York before Canterbury, as if he meant to modify the latter-commanding them to give no obedience to the Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire-that is, to offer no resistance to English causes being

York had and have the governance of you, and of all your land, the which none of your true liege men ought to usurp or take upon them." (Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 199.) For this honest advice the Duke of Gloucester had in after-years (1447) to pay the penalty of his life. Henry Beaufort, the rich cardinal as he was styled, died in 1447. "He was," says Holinshed, "more noble in blood than notable in learning; haughty in stomach and high of countenance; rich above measure, but not very liberal; disdainful to his kin, and dreadful to his lovers; preferring money to friendship; many things beginning and few performing, save in malice and mischief." (Vol. 3, p. 112.) He was succeeded in his bishopric by William Waynflete, a prelate of wisdom and learning, who was made Chancellor of England, and was the founder of Magdalen College, Oxford.

⁶It may be viewed, perhaps, as collateral evidence of the reviving power of Christianity in England, that about this time it was enacted that fairs and markets should not be held in cathedrals and churches, save twice in the year (Collier); that no commodities or victuals should be exposed for sale in London on Sabbath, and that artificers and handicraftsmen should not carry home their wares to their employers on the sacred day. "But this ordinance was too good," says the author from whom Holinshed quotes, "for so bad an age, and therefore died within a short time after the magistrate had given it life." (Vol. 3, p. 206.)

carried for adjudication to the courts of Rome, or to the appointment of foreigners to English livings, and the transport beyond sea of their revenues-and declaring that should they themselves, or any others, submit to these laws, they would ipso facto be excommunicated, and denied absolution, except at the point of death and from the Pope himself. ⁷ About the same time the Pope pronounced a censure upon the archbishop, and it serves to illustrate the jealousy with which the encroachments of the Vatican were watched by the English sovereign and his council, to find the primate complaining to the Pope that he could not be informed of the sentence in the regular way, that he knew it only by report, “for he had not so much as opened the bulls that contained the censure, because he was commanded by the king to bring these instruments, with the seals whole, and lodge them in the paper-office till the Parliament sat.” ⁸

The Pope did not rest with enjoining the clergy to hold the obnoxious statutes null and void; he took the extraordinary step of writing four letters-two to the king, one to the Parliament, and another to the Duke of Bedford, then Regent of France-urging and commanding them, as they valued the salvation of their souls, to repeal the Act of Praemunire.

The Pope’s letter to the Duke of Bedford is a specimen of the spirit that animated the Popedom under Martin V. It is fair to state, however, that the Pope at that moment had received a special provocation which explains so far, if it does not excuse, the heat of his language. His nuncio had been lately imprisoned in England for delivering his briefs and letters. It may be supposed, although the bull does not acknowledge it, that they contained matter prejudicial to the crown. The Pope, in his letter to the Duke of Bedford, appears to strike only at the Act of Praemunire, but he does so with all his might. He calls it “an execrable statute,” that was contrary to all reason and religion; that in pursuance of this Act the law of nations and the privilege of ambassadors were violated, and his nuncios much more coarsely used in a Christian country than those of that character among Saracens and Turks; that it was a hideous reproach to the

⁷Collier, vol 1, bk. 7, p. 655. The letter is dated 8th December, the tenth year of his Popedom. Collier supposes that this is a mistake for the eleventh year of Martin’s Pontificate, which would make the year 1427.

⁸Burnet, *Hist. Reform.*, vol. 1, p. 111. Collier, vol. 1, p. 656.

English to fall thus short of infidels in justice and humanity; and that, without speedy reformation, it was to be feared some heavy judgment would be drawn down upon them. He concludes by desiring the Duke of Bedford to use his interest to wipe off the imputation from the Government, to retrieve the honour of the Church, and “chain up the rigor of these persecuting statutes.” It is an old trick of Rome to raise the cry of “persecution,” and to demand “justice,” whenever England has withstood her encroachments, and tried to bind up her hands from meddling with the gold or violating the laws of the nation.

When Parliament assembled, the two archbishops, Canterbury and York, accompanied by several bishops and abbots, presented themselves in the Refectory of the Abbey of Westminster, where the Commons were sitting, and, premising that they intended nothing to the prejudice of the king’s prerogative or the integrity of the Constitution, they craved Parliament to satisfy the Pope by repealing the Act of Praemunire. Chicheley had begun to quail before the storm gathering at Rome. Happily the Commons were more jealous of the nation’s honour and independence than the hierarchy. Rejecting the archbishops’ advice to “serve two masters,” they refused to repeal the Act.⁹

The Pope, notwithstanding that he had been baulked in his attempts to bend the Parliament of England to his will, continued his aggressions upon the privileges of the English Church. He sustained himself its chief bishop, and conducted himself as if the Act of Praemunire did not exist. Paying no respect to the right of the chapters to elect, and the power of the king to grant his *conge d’elire*, he issued his provisors appointing to vacant livings, not on the ground of piety or learning, but of riches and interest. The highest price in the market of Rome commanded the benefice. Pope Martin V., on the termination of the Council of Constance, promoted not less than fourteen persons to various bishoprics in the province of Canterbury alone. The Pope empowered his favorites to hold sees in commendam, that is, to draw their temporalities, while another discharged the duty, or professed to do so. Pope Eugene IV. (1438) gave the bishopric

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⁹Burner, *Collection of Records*, vol. 1, p. 100; apud Collier, vol. 1, p. 656. In 1438, Charles VII. established the Pragmatic Sanction in his Parliament at Bourges. The Pragmatic Sanction was very much in France what the Act of Praemunire was in England

of Ely in commendam to the Archbishop of Rouen, and after some resistance this Frenchman was allowed to enjoy the revenues.¹⁰ He ventured on other stretches of his supremacy in the matter of pluralities, of non-residence, and of exemptions in favor of minors, as the holders of ecclesiastical livings. We find the Pope, further, issuing bulls empowering his nuncios to impose taxes upon the clergy, and collect money. We trace, in short, in the ecclesiastical annals of the time, a steady and persistent effort on the one side to encroach, and a tolerably steady and continuous effort on the other to repel. The Ven. Henry Edward Manning, Archdeacon of Chichester,¹¹ with strict historical truth, says: "If any man will look down along the line of early English history, he will see a standing contest between the rulers of this land and the Bishops of Rome. The Crown and Church of England with a steady opposition resisted the entrance and encroachment of the secularised power of the Pope in England."¹² From the days of King John the shadow of the Vatican had begun to go back on England; it was still shortening in the fifteenth century, and its lessening line gave promise of a time, for the advent of which the good Lord Cobham had expressed an ardent wish, when that ominous penumbra, terminating at Calais, would no longer be projected across the sea to the English shore.

While the English monarchs were fighting against the Papal supremacy with the one hand, they were persecuting Lollardism with the other. At the very time that they were framing such Acts as those of Provisors and Praemunire, to defend the canons of the Church, and the constitution of the State, from the utter demolition with which both were threatened by a foreign tyranny, they were enacting edicts for the conviction of Lollards, and planting stakes to burn them. This does not surprise us. It is ever so in the earliest stage of a great reform. The good which has begun to stir in the quiet depths below, sends the evil to the surface in quickened activity. Hence such contradictions as that before us. To a casual eye, matters appear to be getting worse; whereas the very effervescence and violence of the old powers is a sign that the new are not far off, and that a reformation has already set in. The Jews have a proverb to this

¹⁰Collier, Vol. 1, bk. 7, p. 666.

¹¹Created a Cardinal of the Church of Rome, March, 1875.

¹²The Unity of the Church, p. 361; Lond., 1842.

effect-“When the tale of bricks is doubled, then Moses will come,” which saying, however, if it were more exactly to express the truth of the fact and the law of the Divine working, should run-The tale of bricks has been doubled, therefore Moses is come.

We trace in the England of the fifteenth century two powerful currents, and both are, in a sense, Protestant.

Lollardism, basing itself upon the Word of God and the rights of conscience, was essentially and wholly Protestant. The fight against the Roman supremacy, basing itself upon the canons of the Church and the laws of the kingdom, was also so far Protestant. It was a protest against a power that was lifting its seat above all law, and crushing every right. And what, we ask, engendered this spirit of opposition? Little did the party who were fighting against the supremacy dream whence their movement drew its existence. They would have been ashamed to own it, even if made aware of it. And yet it is true that the very Lollardism which they were seeking to trample out had originated the spirit that was now shown in defense of national independence and against Papal encroachments. The Lollard, or Protestant, or Christian principle-for it matters not by which one of these three names we designate it-had all along through the Dark Ages been present in the bosom of European Christendom, preserving to the conscience some measure of action and power, to the intellect some degree of energy and expansion, and to the soul the desire and the hope of liberty. Ordinarily this principle attested its presence by the piety with which it nourished the heart, and the charity and purity with which it enriched the lives of individual men and women, scattered up and down in monasteries, or in cathedral chapters, or in rural vicarages, or in hidden places where history passed them by. At other times it forced itself to the surface, and revealed its power on a large scale, as in the Albigensan revival. But the powers of evil were then too strong, to permit of its keeping the footing it had momentarily obtained. Beaten down, it again became torpid. But in the great spring-time which came along with Wicliffe it was effectually roused never again to slumber. Taking now its place in the front, it found itself supported by a host of agencies, of which itself was the real although the indirect creator. For it was the Lollard or Christian spirit, never, amid all the barbarism and strifes and superstitions that overlaid Mediaeval society, eliminated

or purged out, that hailed letters in that early morning, that tasted their sweetness, that prompted to the cultivation of them, that panted for a wider sphere, for a greater liberty, for a purer state of society, and never rested till it had achieved it. This despised principle-for in the fifteenth century it is seen at the bar of tribunals, in prisons, at stakes, in the guise of a felon-was in truth the originator of these activities; it communicated to them the first impulse. Without it they never would have been: night, not morning, would have succeeded the Dark Ages. It was the day-spring to Christendom. And this is certified to us when, tracing the course of the two contemporary currents which we find flowing in England in the century under review, we see them, at a point a little way only in advance of that at which we are now arrived, uniting their streams, and forming one combined movement, known as the English Reformation.

But before that point could be reached England had to pass through a terrible conflict.

Chapter 11: Influence of the Wars of the Fifteenth Century on the Progress of Protestantism

Convulsions of the Fifteenth Century—Fall of Constantinople—Wars in Bohemia—in Italy—in Spain—in Switzerland—Wars of the Papal Schism—Was it Peace or War which the Popes gave to Christendom?—Wars originated by the Popes: the Crusades; the War of Investitures; the Albigensian and Waldensian Crusades; the Wars in Naples, Poland, etc.; the Feuds in Italy; the Hussite Campaigns, etc—Wars of the Roses—Traced to the Council of Archbishop Chicheley—Providential End of the Wars of the Fifteenth Century—The Nobility Weakened—The Throne made Powerful—Why?—Hussitism and Lollardism

Picture: The Archbishops of York and Canterbury before the Parliament at Westminster Abbey

Picture: Cardinal Beauforts Chantry, Winchester Cathedral

The day that was hastening towards the world sent terrible tempests before it as the heralds of its approach. Than the middle of the fifteenth century there is, perhaps, no point in modern history that presents a scene of more universal turmoil and calamity, if we except the period that witnessed the fall of the Western Empire. Nowhere is there stability or rest. All around, as far as the eye can reach, appears a sea whose waters, swollen into huge billows by the force of the mighty winds, are assailing the very foundations of the earth. The Christian of that day, when he cast his eyes around on a world rocked and tossed by these great tempests, must have despaired, had he not remembered that there is One who “sits King upon the floods.”

The armies of the Turk were gathering round Constantinople, and the Queen of the East was about to bow her head and sink in a tempest of pillage, of rapine, and of slaughter. The land of Bohemia, watered, as with a plenteous rain, once, again, and a third time, with German blood, was gloomy and silent. Germany had suffered far more than she had inflicted.

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From the Rhine to the Elbe, from the Black Forest to the Baltic, her nations were lamenting their youth slaughtered in the ill-fated campaigns into which Rome had drawn them against the Hussites. Italy, split up into principalities, was ceaselessly torn by the ambitions and feuds of its petty rulers, and if for a moment the din of these intestine strifes was hushed, it was in presence of some foreign invader whom the beauty of that land had drawn with his armies across the Alps. The magnificent cities of Spain, adorned by the art and enriched by the industry of the Moors, were being emptied of their inhabitants by the crusades of bigotry; the Moslem flag was being torn down on the walls of Granada, and the race which had converted the Vega around the Moorish capital into a garden, watering it with the icy torrents of the Sierra Nevada, and clothing it with corn-fields and orange-groves, were fleeing across the Straits to form new seats on the northern shores of Africa. The Swiss, who had looked for centuries with almost uninterrupted indifference on the wars and convulsions that distracted the nations that dwelt at the feet of their mountains, finding in their great hills an impregnable fortress against invasion, now saw themselves menaced in their valleys with a foreign sword, and had to fight for their immemorial independence. They were assailed by the two powerful kingdoms on each side of them; for Austria and France, in their desire to enlarge their territories, had become forgetful that in leveling the Alps of the Swiss, they but effaced the barrier between themselves, which prevented the two nations mingling their blood on fierce and frequent battle-fields.

As if the antipathies of race, and the ambition of princes, were not enough to afflict an unhappy age, another element of contention was imported into the strife by the Papal schism. The rival Popes and their supporters brought their cause into the battle-field, and torrents of Christian blood were shed to determine the question which was the true Vicar. The arguments from piety, from wisdom, from learning were but dust in the balance against the unanswerable argument of the sword, and the gospel of peace was converted into the tocsin of war. The evils flowing from the schism, and which for so many years afflicted Christendom, cannot but raise the question in every dispassionate mind how far the Popes have fulfilled the office assigned them as the "Fathers of Christendom" and the Peacemakers

of the World? Leaving out of view their adulators on the one side, and their incriminators on the other, let us put to history the question, How many are the years of peace, and how many are the years of war, which have come out of the Papal chair, and what proportion does the one bear to the other

To put, then, a few plain questions touching matters of fact, let us ask, from whom came the crusades which for two centuries continued to waste the treasure and the blood of both Europe and Asia? History answers, from the Popes. Monks preached the crusades, monks enlisted soldiers to fight them and when the host was marshalled and all was ready, monks placed themselves at their head, and led them onward, their track marked by devastation, to the shores of Syria, where their furious fanaticism exploded in scenes of yet greater devastation and horror. In these expeditions the Popes were always the chiefs; the crossed emperors and kings were enlisted under their banner, and put under the command of their legates; at the Popes' mandate it was that they went forth to slay and to be slain. In the absence of these princes the Popes took into their hands the government of their kingdoms; the persons and goods of all the crusaders were declared under their protection; in their behalf they caused every process, civil and criminal, to be suspended; they made a lavish distribution of indulgences and dispensations, to keep alive fanatical fervor and sanguinary zeal; they sometimes enjoined as a command, and sometimes as a penance, service in the crusades; their nuncios and legates received the alms and legacies bequeathed for maintaining these wars; and when, after two dismal centuries, they came to an end, it was found that none save the Popes were the gainers thereby. While the authority of the Papal See was vastly strengthened, the secular princes were in the same proportion weakened and impoverished; the sway of Rome was confirmed, for the nations, broken and bowed down, suffered a yoke to be rivetted upon their necks that could not be broken for ages. ¹

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¹In proof of this summary view of the origin and effects of the crusades, the author begs to refer his readers to Baron., Ann., 1096; Gibbon, chap. 58, 59; Moreri, Le Grand Dict. Hist., tom. 3; Innet, Origines Anglicance, vol. 2; Sismondi, Hist., etc. etc. The author speaks, of course, of the direct and immediate effects which flowed from the crusades; there were remote and indirect results of a beneficent kind evolved from them,

We ask further, from whom came the contest between the mitre and the Empire-the war of investitures,-which divided and ravaged Christendom for a full century and a half? History answers, from the Pope-Gregory VII. From whom came the Albigensian crusades, which swept in successive tempests of fire and blood across the south of France? History answers, from the Pope-Innocent III. Whence came those armies of assassins, which times without number penetrated into the Waldensian valleys, carrying the torch into dwelling and sanctuary, and inflicting on the unoffending inhabitants barbarities and cruelties of so horrible a nature that they never can be known, because they never dare be told? History answers, from the Pope. Who made donations of kingdoms-Naples, Sicily, Aragon, Poland, and others-knowing that those to whom they had gifted them could possess them only by fighting for them? History answers, the Popes.

Who deposed sovereigns, and sanctioned insurrection and war between them and their subjects? The Popes. Who so often tempted the Swiss from their mountains to shed their blood on the plains of Italy? The Bishop of Sion, acting as the legate of the Pope. Who was it that, the better to maintain the predominance of their own sway, kept Italy divided, at the cost of almost ceaseless intestine feuds and wars, and the leaving the gates of the country unguarded, or purposely open, for the entrance of foreign hordes? History answers, the Popes. Who was it that, having entered into war with France, threw aside the mitre for the helmet, and, passing over a bridge on the Tiber, is said to have thrown the keys of St. Peter into the river, seeing they had served him so ill, and called for the sword of St. Paul? Pope Julius II. Who organised the successive campaigns waged against the Hussites, and on two several occasions sent his legate-a-latore to lead the crusaders? History answers, the Pope.

We stop at the era of the Reformation. We put no questions to history touching the wars in Germany, the wars in France, the wars in the Low Countries, the wars in Hungary, and in other lands; in which, too, the blood of the scaffold was largely mingled with the blood of the battle-field. We restrict our examples to those ages

but this was the doing of an overruling Providence, and was neither foreseen nor intended by their authors.

when Rome was not only a power, but the power in Christendom. Kings were then her vassals, and she had only to speak to be obeyed. Why then did she not summon them to her bar, and command them to sheathe their swords? Why did she not bind them in the chain of her excommunications, and compel them to be at peace till she had arbitrated in their quarrels, and so prevent this great effusion of human blood? Here are the Pope's exploits on the field of war. Why has history forgotten to chronicle his labours and sacrifices in the blessed work of peace? True, we do find a few outstanding instances of the Popes enjoining peace among Christian princes. We find the Council of Lyons (1245) ordaining a general cessation of arms among the Western sovereigns, with power to prelates to proceed by censures against those who refused to acquiesce; but for what end? in order that the crusade which had been projected might be carried out with greater unanimity and vigor. ² We find Gregory X. sending his nuncio to compel observance of this decree of the Council on Philip III. of France and the King of Castile, knowing that these two sovereigns were about to decide a certain difference by arms, because he needed their swords to fight his own battles. We find, further, Boniface VIII. enjoining all sovereigns to terminate all wars and differences at home, that, they might be in circumstances to prosecute more vigorously the holy wars of the Church. These, and a few similar instances, are all that we have on the one side to set over against the long roll of melancholy facts on the other. History's verdict is, that with the ascent of the Popes to supremacy came not peace but war to the nations of Christendom. The noon of the Papal power was illustrated, not by its calm splendors and its tranquil joys, but by tempest and battle and destruction.

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We return from this digression to the picture of Europe in the middle of the fifteenth century. To the distractions that were rife in every quarter, in the east, in the south, and in the center of Christendom, we have to add those that raged in the north. The King of England had proclaimed war against France. Mighty armaments were setting sail from

²Hardouin, *Acta Concil.*, tom. 7, p; 395; Parisiis, 1714.

- "that pale, that white-faced shore, Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides, And coops from other lands her islanders"³

the man who led them being forgetful that nature had ordained the sea around England to be at once the limit of her seat and the rampart of her power, and that by extending he was imperiling his dominions. This ill-starred expedition, out of which came so many calamities to both countries, was planned, we have seen, by the Romish clergy, for the purpose of finding work for the active-minded Henry V., and especially of diverting his eye from their own possessions to a more tempting prize, the crown of France. The mischiefs and woes to which this advice opened the door did not exhaust themselves till the century was drawing to a close. The armies of England smote not merely the northern coasts of France, they penetrated to the center of the kingdom, marking the line of their march by cities sacked and provinces devastated and partially depopulated. This calamity fell heavily on the upper ranks of French society. On the fatal field of Agincourt perished the flower of their nobility; moanings and lamentations resounded in their chateaux and royal residences; for there were few indeed of the great families that had not cause to mourn the counsel of Archbishop Chicheley to Henry V., which had directed this destructive tempest against their country.

At last the Cloud of calamity returned northward (1450), and discharged its last and heaviest contents on England itself. The long and melancholy train of events which now began to run their course at home took its rise in the war with France. The premature death of Henry V.;⁴ the factions and intrigues that strove around the throne of

³Shakespeare, *King John*, act 2, scene 1.

⁴"God suddenly touched him, unbodying his soul in the flower of his youth, and the glory of his conquest."-Speech of Duke of York to Parliament, 1460. (Holinshed, vol 3, p. 264.) While the duke was asserting his title to the crown in the Upper House, there happened, says the chronicler, "a strange chance in the very same instant among the Commons in the Nether House. A crown, which did hang in the middle of the same, to garnish a branch to set lights upon, without touch of man, or blast of wind, suddenly fell down. About the same time also fell down the crown which stood on the top of Dover Castle. Soon after the duke was slain on the battlefield, and with him 2,800, mostly young gentlemen, heirs of great families. His head, with a crown of paper, stuck on a pole, was presented to the queen. Some write," says the chronicler, "that he was taken alive, made to stand on a mole-hill, with a garland of bulrushes instead of a crown, and his

his infant son; the conspiracies that spread disquiet and distraction over the kingdom; and, finally, the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses, which, like a fearful conflagration, consumed all the great families of the kingdom, the royal house included; all these tragedies and crimes connect themselves with, and can be traced up to, the fateful counsel of the clergy, so eagerly adopted and acted upon by the king. Nor was the blood spilt on the battle-field the only evil that darkened that unhappy period. In the wake of fierce civil war came a relaxation of law, and a suspension of industry. The consequence of the former was that the country was defiled by crime and outrage; and of the latter, that frequent famines and pestilences decimated the population. ⁵

The contest which opened in 1452 between the White Rose of York and the Red Rose of Lancaster, it is the province of the civil historian to narrate. We notice it here only so far as it bears on the history of Protestantism. The war was not finished in less than thirty years; it was signalled by twelve pitched battles; it is computed to have cost the lives of eighty princes of the blood, and almost entirely annihilated the ancient nobility of England. ⁶ The kingdom had seemed as a stricken land ever since the De Hoereticis Comburendo law was placed upon its statute-book, but the Wars of the Roses filled up its cup of misery. ⁷

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The rival hosts were inflamed with the rancorous hate peculiar to civil conflicts, and seldom have more sanguinary battles been fought

captors, kneeling before him in derision, said, "Hail, king without rule!-hail, king without heritage!-hail, duke and prince without people and possessions!" and then struck off his head.

⁵"This year, 1477," says Holinshed (vol. 3, p. 346), "happened so fierce and quick a pestilence that the previous fifteen years consumed not the third part of the people that only four months miserably and pitifully dispatched and brought to their graves."

⁶Hume, Hist. Eng. chap. 29.

⁷Rumors of prodigies and portents helped to augment the prevalent foreboding and alarm of the people. Of these the following may be taken as a sample, the more that there is a touch of the dramatic about it: - "In November, 1457, in the isle of Portland, not far from the town of Weymouth, was seen a cock coming out of the sea, having a great crest upon his head, and a great red beard, and legs half a yard long. He stood on the water and crowed three times, and every time turned him about, and beckoned with his head, toward the north, the south, and the west, and was in color like a pheasant, and when he had crowed three times he vanished away." (Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 244.) We read of "a rain of blood" in Bedfordshire, "which spotted clothes hung out to dry."

than those which now deluged the soil of England with the blood of its own children. Sometimes the House of York was victorious, and then the Lancastrians were mercilessly slaughtered; at other times it was the House of Lancaster that triumphed, and then the adherents of York had to expiate in the hour of defeat the barbarities they had inflicted in the day of victory. The land mourned its many woes. The passage of armies to and fro over it was marked by castles, churches, and dwellings burned, and fields wasted.⁸ In these calamities passed the greater part of the second half of the fifteenth century. The reign of the Plantagenets, who had so long governed England, came to an end on the bloody field of Bosworth (1485), and the House of Tudor, in the person of Henry VII., mounted the throne.

If these troubles were so far a shield to the Wicliffites, by giving the King of England and his nobles other things to think of than hunting for Lollards, they rendered any revival of their cause impossible. The work of doing to death those who professed and preached the Reformed faith, though hindered by the causes before alluded to, did not actually cease. From time to time during this period, some were called, to use the words of Fox, "to consummate their testimony in the fire." "The intimidated Lollards," says D'Aubigne, "were compelled to hide themselves in the humblest ranks of the people, and to hold their meetings in secret. The work of redemption was proceeding noiselessly among the elect of God. Of these Lollards there were many who had been redeemed by Jesus Christ, but in general they knew not, to the same extent as the Protestant Christians of the sixteenth century, the quickening and justifying power of faith. They were plain, meek, and often timid folk, attracted by the Word of God, affected by the condemnation it pronounces against the errors of Rome, and desirous of living according to its commandments. God had assigned them a part-and an important part too-in the great

⁸The Romish clergy were careful, in the midst of this general destruction of life and substance, that their possessions should not come by loss. The following award was made at Westminster, 23rd March, 1458:-"That at the costs, charges, and expenses of the Duke of York, the Earls of Warwick and Salisbury, forty-five pounds of yearly rent should be assured by way of mortisement for ever, unto the monastery of St. Albans, for suffrages and obits to be kept, and alms to be employed for the souls of Edmund, late Duke of Somerset; Henry, late Earl of Northumberland; and Thomas, late Lord Clifford, lately slain in the battle of St. Albans, and buried in the Abbey church, and also for the souls of all others slain in the same battle." (Holinshed, vol. 3, p. 247.)

transformation of Christianity. Their humble piety, their passive resistance, the shameful treatment which they bore with resignation, the penitent's robes with which they were covered, the tapers they were compelled to hold at the church door—all these things betrayed the pride of the priests, and filled the most generous mind with doubts and vague desires. By a baptism of suffering, God was then preparing the way to a glorious Reformation.”⁹

Looking only at the causes acting on the surface, surveying the condition and working of established institutions, especially the “Church,” which was every day mounting higher in power, and at the same time plunging deeper into error; which had laid its hand upon the throne and made its occupant simply its lieutenant—upon the statute-book, and had made it little better than the register of its intolerant edicts—upon the magistracy, and left it hardly any higher function than the humble one of executing its sentences—looking at all this, one would have expected nothing else than that the darkness would grow yet deeper, and that the storms now afflicting the world would rage with even greater fury. And yet the dawn had already come. There was light on the horizon. Nay, these furious blasts were bearing on their wings blessings to the nations. Constantinople was falling, that the treasures of ancient literature might be scattered over the Western world, and the human mind quickened. The nobility of France and England was being weakened on the battle-field, that the throne might rise into power, and be able to govern.

It was needful that an institution, the weakness of which had invited the lawlessness of the nobles, and the arrogance of the hierarchy, should be lifted up and made strong. This was one of the first steps towards the emancipation of society from the spiritual bondage into which it had fallen. Ever since the days of Gregory VII., monarchy had been in subordination to priesthood. The policy of the Popes, pursued through four centuries, was to centralise their power, and place it at the summit. One of the means adopted for this end was to make the nobles a poise to the kings, and by weakening both parties, to make the Pope the most powerful of the three. This policy had been successful. The Popes had grown to be more than a match for the petty sovereigns of the fifteenth century. Nothing

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⁹D'Aubigne, vol. 5, p. 148.

but a system of strong monarchies could now cope with that chair of combined spiritual and temporal power which had established itself at Rome, and grown to be so strong that it made kings their tools, and through them scourged their subjects.

Accordingly we see at last emerging from the tempests that raged all through the century under review, three powerful thrones - that of England, that of France, and that of Spain. The undivided power of Christendom was no longer in one hand, and that hand the holder of the tiara. The three powerful sovereigns who had risen up could keep their nobles in check, could spurn the dictation of the hierarchy, and so could meet on equal terms the sovereign of the Vatican. With that sovereign their interests were sometimes in accordance, and sometimes in opposition, and this poise between Popedom and monarchy constituted a shield for that great expansion of the Protestant movement which was about to take place.

Before leaving England in the fifteenth century, it is necessary to remember that during this century the great movement which had been originated by the instrumentality of Wicliffe in the previous one, was parted into two; the one branch having its seat in the west, and the other in the east of Christendom.

Further, that movement was known under two names-Hussitism in Bohemia, and Lollardism in England. When the famous Protest was given in by the German princes in 1529 it dropped both appellatives, and received henceforward that one designation by which it has been known these three centuries. The day will come when it will drop in turn the name it now bears-that of Protestantism-and will resume that more ancient, more catholic, and more venerable one, given it eighteen centuries ago in Antioch, where the disciples were first called - Christians.

Although there was one spirit in both branches of the movement, yet was there diversity of operations. The power of Protestantism was shown in Bohemia in converting a nation into heroes, in England it was shown in making martyrs. In the one country its history leads us to camps and battlefields, in the other it conducts us to prisons and stakes. The latter reveals the nobler champions, and the more glorious conflict. Yet do we not blame the Hussites. Unlike the Lollards, they were a nation. Their country was invaded, their consciences were threatened; and they violated no principle of Christianity that

we are acquainted with, when they girded on the sword in defense of their hearths and their altars. And surely we do not err when we say that Providence set the seal of its approval upon their patriotic resistance, in that marvellous success that crowned their arms, and which continued to flow in a tide that knew not a moment's ebb till that fatal day when they entered into compact with Rome. In the Great Roll we find the names of those who "waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens" as well as that of those who "were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tortured, were slain with the sword, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Still, it must be confessed that the stake of the Lollard showed itself in the end a more powerful weapon for defending Protestantism than the sword of the Hussite. The arms of the Bohemians merely extinguished enemies, the stakes of the Lollards created disciples. In their deaths they sowed the seed of the Gospel; that seed remained in the soil, and while "the battle of the warrior, with its confused noise and garments rolled in blood," was swaying to and fro over the face of England, it continued to germinate in silence, awaiting the sixteenth century, with its mollient air, for the time of springing.

**Book 8: History of Protestantism in
Switzerland from A.D. 1516 to its
Establishment at Zurich, 1525**

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Chapter 1: Switzerland - The Country and the People

The Reformation dawns first in England—Wicliffe—Luther—His No—What it Implied—Uprising of Conscience—Who shall Rule, Power or Conscience?—Contemporaneous Appearance of the Reformers—Switzerland—Variety and Grandeur of its Scenery—Its History—Bravery and Patriotism of its People—A New Liberty approaches—Will the Swiss Welcome it?—Yes—An Asylum for the Reformation—Decline in Germany—Revival in Switzerland

Picture: View of Westminster Abbey from the Mall, St. James's Park

Picture: View in Lucerne

In following the progress of the recovered Gospel over Christendom in the morning of the sixteenth century, our steps now lead us to Switzerland. In England first broke the dawn of that blessed day. Foremost in that race of mighty men and saviours by whose instrumentality it pleased God to deliver Christendom from the thralldom into which the centuries had seen it fall to ignorance and superstition, stands Wicliffe. His appearance was the pledge that after him would come others, endowed with equal, and it might be with greater gifts, to carry forward the same great mission of emancipation. The success which followed his preaching gave assurance that that Divine Influence which had wrought so mightily in olden time, and chased the night of Paganism from so many realms, overturning its altars, and laying in the dust the powerful thrones that upheld it, would yet again be unloosed, and would display its undying vitality and unimpaired strength in dispelling the second night which had gathered over the world, and overturning the new altars which had been erected upon the ruins of the Pagan ones.

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But a considerable interval divided Wicliffe from his great successors. The day seemed to tarry, the hopes of those who looked for “redemption” were tried by a second delay. That Arm which had

“cut the bars” of the Pagan house of bondage seemed “shortened,” so that it could not unlock the gates of the yet more doleful prison of the Papacy. Even in England and Bohemia, to which the Light was restricted, so far from continuing to brighten and send forth its rays to illuminate the skies of other countries, it seemed to be again fading away into night. No second Wicliffe had risen up; the grandeur, the power, and the corruption of Rome had reached a loftier height than ever-when suddenly a greater than Wicliffe stepped upon the stage. Not greater in himself, for Wicliffe sent his glance deeper down, and cast it wider around on the field of truth, than perhaps even Luther. It seemed in Wicliffe as if one of the theological giants of the early days of the Christian Church had suddenly appeared among the puny divines of the fourteenth century, occupied with their little projects of the reformation of the Church “in its head and members,” and astonished them by throwing down amongst them his plan of reformation according to the Word of God. But Luther was greater than Wicliffe, in that borne up on his shield he seemed not only of loftier stature than other men, but loftier than even the proto-Reformer. Wicliffe and the Lollards had left behind them a world so far made ready for the Reformers of the sixteenth century, and the efforts of Luther and his fellow-laborers therefore told with sudden and prodigious effect. Now broke forth the day. In the course of little more than three years, the half of Christendom had welcomed the Gospel, and was beginning to be bathed in its splendor.

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We have already traced the progress of the Protestant light in Germany, from the year 1517 to its first culmination in 1521 from the strokes of the monk’s hammer on the door of the castle-church at Wittenberg, in presence of the crowd of pilgrims assembled on All Souls’ Eve, to his No thundered forth in the Diet of Worms, before the throne of the Emperor Charles V. That No sounded the knell of all ancient slavery; it proclaimed unmistakably that the Spiritual had at last made good its footing in presence of the Material; that conscience would no longer bow down before empire; and that a power whose rights had long been proscribed had at last burst its bonds, and would wrestle with principalities and thrones for the scepter of the world. The opposing powers well knew that all this terrible significance lay couched in Luther’s one short sentence,

“I cannot retract.” It was the voice of a new age, saying, I cannot repress the boundary across which I have come. I am the heir of the future; the nations are my heritage; I must fulfill my appointed task of leading them to liberty, and woe to those who shall oppose me in the execution of my mission! Ye emperors, ye kings, ye princes and judges of the earth, “be wise.” If you co-operate with me, your recompense will be thrones more stable, and realms more flourishing. But if not - my work must be done nevertheless; but alas! for the opposers; nor throne, nor realm, nor name shall be left them.

One thing has struck all who have studied, with minds at once intelligent and reverent, the era of which we speak, and that is the contemporaneous appearance of so many men of great character and sublimest intellect at this epoch. No other age can show such a galaxy of illustrious names. The nearest approach to it in history is perhaps the well-known famous half century in Greece. Before the appearance of Christ the Greek intellect burst out all at once in dazzling splendor, and by its achievements in all departments of human effort shed a glory over the age and country. Most students of history have seen in this wondrous blossoming of the Greek genius a preparation of the world, by the quickening of its mind and the widening of its horizon, for the advent of Christianity. We find this phenomenon repeated, but on a larger scale, in Christendom at the opening of the sixteenth century.

One of the first to mark this was Ruchat, the eloquent historian of the Swiss Reformation. “It came to pass,” says he, “that God raised up, at this time, in almost all the countries of Europe, Italy not excepted, a number of learned, pious, and enlightened men, animated with a great zeal for the glory of God and the good of the Church. These illustrious men arose all at once, as if by one accord, against the prevailing errors, without however having concerted together; and by their constancy and their firmness, accompanied by the blessing from on high, they happily succeeded in different places in rescuing the torch of the Gospel from under the bushel that had hidden its light, and by means of it effected the reformation of the Church; and as God gave, at least in part, this grace to different

nations, such as the French, English, and Germans, he granted the same to the Swiss nation: happy if they had all profited by it.”¹

The country on the threshold of which we now stand, and the eventful story of whose reformation we are to trace, is in many respects a remarkable one. Nature has selected it as the chosen field for the display of her wonders. Here beauty and terror, softness and ruggedness, the most exquisite loveliness and stern, savage, appalling sublimity lie folded up together, and blend into one panorama of stupendous and dazzling magnificence. Here is the little flower gemming the meadow, and yonder on the mountain's side is the tall, dark, silent fir-tree. Here is the crystal rivulet, gladdening the vale through which it flows, and yonder is the majestic lake, spread out amid the hushed mountains, reflecting from its mirror-like bosom the rock that nods over its strand, and the white peak which from afar looks down upon it out of mid-heaven. Here is the rifted gorge across which savage rocks fling their black shadows, making it almost night at noon-day; here, too, the glacier, like a great white ocean, hangs its billows on the mountain's brow; and high above all, the crowning glory in this scene of physical splendors, is some giant of the Alps, bearing on his head the snows of a thousand winters, and waiting for the morning sun to enkindle them with his light, and fill the firmament with their splendor.

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The politics of Switzerland are nearly as romantic as its landscape. They exhibit the same blending of the homely and the heroic. Its people, simple, frugal, temperate, and hardy, have yet the faculty of kindling into enthusiasm, and some of the most chivalric feats that illustrate the annals of modern war have been enacted on the soil of this land. Their mountains, which expose them to the fury of the tempest, to the violence of the torrent, and the dangers of the avalanche, have taught them self-denial, and schooled them into daring. Nor have their souls remained untempered by the grandeurs amid which they daily move, as witness, on proper occasions, their devotion at the altar, and their heroism on the battle-field. Passionately fond of their country, they have ever shown themselves ready, at the call of patriotism, to rush to the battle-field, and contend

¹Histoire de la Reformation, de la Suisse. Par Abraham Ruchat, Ministre du Saint Evangile et Professeur en Belles Lettres dans l'Academie du Lausanne. Vol 1, p. 70. Lausanne, 1835.

against the most tremendous odds. From tending their herds and flocks on those breezy pasture-lands that skirt the eternal snows, the first summons has brought them down into the plain to do battle for the freedom handed down to them from their fathers. Peaceful shepherds have been suddenly transformed into dauntless warriors, and the mail-clad phalanxes of the invader have gone down before the impetuosity of their onset, his spearmen have reeled beneath the battle axes and arrows of the mountaineers, and both Austria and France have often had cause to repent having incautiously roused the Swiss lion from his slumbers.

But now a new age had come, in which deeper feelings were to stir the souls of the Swiss, and kindle them into a holier enthusiasm. A higher liberty than that for which their fathers had shed their blood on the battlefields of the past was approaching their land. What reception will they give it? Will the men who never declined the summons to arms, sit still when the trumpet calls them to this nobler warfare? Will the yoke on the conscience gall them less than that which they felt to be so grievous though it pressed only on the body? No! the Swiss will nobly respond to the call now to be addressed to them. They were to see by the light of that early dawn that Austria had not been their greatest oppressor: that Rome had succeeded in imposing upon them a yoke more grievous by far than any the House of Hapsburg had put upon their fathers. Had they fought and bled to rend the lighter yoke, and were they meekly to bear the heavier? Its iron was entering the soul. No! they had been the bond-slaves of a foreign priest too long. This hour should be the last of their vassalage. And in no country did Protestantism find warriors more energetic, or combatants more successful, than the champions that Switzerland sent forth.

Not only were the gates of this grand territory to be thrown open to the Reformation, but here in years to come Protestantism was to find its center and head-quarters. When kings should be pressing it hard with their swords, and chasing it from the more open countries of Europe, it would retreat within this mountain-guarded land, and erecting its seat at the foot of its mighty bulwarks, it would continue from this asylum to speak to Christendom. The day would come when the light would wax dim in Germany, but the Reformation would retrim its lamp in Switzerland, and cause it to

burn with a new brightness, and shed all around a purer splendor than ever was that of morning on its Alps. When the mighty voice that was now marshalling the Protestant host in Germany, and leading it on to victory, should cease to be heard; when Luther should descend into his grave, leaving no one behind him able to grasp his scepter, or wield his sword; when furious tempests should be warring around Protestantism in France, and heavy clouds darkening the morning which had there opened so brightly; when Spain, after a noble effort to break her fetters and escape into the light, should be beaten down by the inquisitor and the despot, and compelled to return to her old prison-there would stand up in Switzerland a great chief, who, pitching his pavilion amid its mountains, and surveying from this center every part of the field, would set in order the battle a second time, and direct its movements till victory should crown the combatants.

Such is the interest of the land we are now approaching. Here mighty champions are to contend, here wise and learned doctors are to teach: but first let us briefly describe the condition in which we find it-the horrible night that has so long covered those lovely valleys and those majestic mountains, on which the first streaks of morning are now beginning to be discernible.

Chapter 2: Condition of Switzerland Prior to the Reformation

Primitive and Mediaeval Christianity—The Latter Unlike the Former—Change in Church’s Discipline—in her Clergy—in her Worship—State of Switzerland—Ignorance of the Bible—The Sacred Languages Unknown—Greek is Heresy—Decay of Schools—Decay of Theology—Distracted State of Society—All Things Conventionally Holy—Sale of Benefices—Swiss Livings held by Foreigners

Picture: View in Lausanne

Picture: Ulrich Zwingli

So changed was the Christianity of the Middle Ages from the Christianity of the primitive times, that it could not have been known to be the same Gospel. The crystal fountains amid the remote and solitary hills, and the foul and turbid river formed by their waters after stagnating in marshes, or receiving the pollution of the great cities past which they roll, are not more unlike than were the pure and simple Gospel as it issued at the beginning from its divine source, and the Gospel exhibited to the world after the traditions and corruptions of men had been incorporated with it. The government of the Church, so easy and sweet in the first age, had grown into a veritable tyranny. The faithful pastors who fed the flock with knowledge and truth, watching with care lest harm should come to the fold, had given place to shepherds who slumbered at their post, or awoke up only to eat the fat and clothe them with the wool. The simple and spiritual worship of the first age had, by the fifth, been changed into a ceremonial, which Augustine complained was “less tolerable than the yoke under which the Jews formerly groaned.”¹ The Christian churches of that day were but little distinguishable from the pagan temples of a former era; and Jehovah was adored by the same ceremonies and rites by which the heathen had expressed

¹Augustin., Epist. 119., Ad Januarium.

their reverence for their deities. In truth, the throne of the Eternal was obscured by the crowd of divinities placed around it, and the one great object of worship was forgotten in the distraction caused by the many competitors-angels, saints, and images-for the homage due to him alone. It was to no effect, one would think, to pull down the pagan temple and demolish the altar of the heathen god, seeing they were to be replaced with fanes as truly superstitious, and images as grossly idolatrous. So early as the fourth century, St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, found in his diocese an altar which one of his predecessors had set up in honour of a brigand, who was worshipped as a martyr.²

The stream of corruption, swollen to such dimensions so early as the fifth century, flowed down with ever-augmenting volume to the fifteenth. Not a country in Christendom which the deluge did not overflow. Switzerland was visited with the fetid stream as well as other lands; and it will help us to estimate the mighty blessing which the Reformation conferred on the world, to take a few examples of the darkness in which this country was plunged before that epoch.

The ignorance of the age extended to all classes and to every department of human knowledge. The sciences and the learned languages were alike unknown; political and theological knowledge were equally neglected. "To be able to read a little Greek," says the celebrated Claude d'Espenes, speaking of that time, "was to render one's self suspected of heresy; to possess a knowledge of Hebrew, was almost to be a heretic outright."³ The schools destined for the instruction of youth contained nothing that was fitted to humanise, and sent forth barbarians rather than scholars. It was a common saying in those days, "The more skillful a grammarian, the worse a theologian." To be a sound divine it was necessary to eschew letters; and verily the clerks of those days ran little risk of spoiling their theology and lowering their reputation by the contamination of learning. For more than four hundred years the theologians knew the Bible only through the Latin version, commonly styled the Vulgate, being absolutely ignorant of the original tongues.⁴ Zwingle, the Reformer of Zurich, drew upon himself the suspicions of certain

²Sulp. Severus, Vit. Martini, cap. 11; apud Ruchat, 1:17.

³Commentar., in 1 Epist. Timot., cap. 3.

⁴Melchior Canus, Loc. Com., p. 59.

[413] priests as a heretic, because he diligently compared the original Hebrew of the Old Testament with this version. And Rodelf Am-Ruhel, otherwise Collinus, Professor of Greek at Zurich, tells us that he was on one occasion in great danger from having in his possession certain Greek books, a thing that was accounted an indubitable mark of heresy. He was Canon of Munster, in Aargau, in the year 1523, when the magistrates of Lucerne sent certain priests to visit his house. Discovering the obnoxious volumes, and judging them to be Greek-from the character, we presume, for no respectable cure would in those days have any nearer acquaintance with the tongue of Demosthenes-" This," they exclaimed, "is Lutheranism! this is heresy! Greek and heresy-it is the same thing!"⁵

A priest of the Grisons, at a public disputation on religion, held at Ilanz about the year 1526, loudly bewailed that ever the learned languages had entered Helvetia. "If," said he, "Hebrew and Greek had never been heard of in Switzerland, what a happy country! what a peaceful state! but now, alas! here they are, and see what a torrent of errors and heresies have rushed in after them."⁶ At that time there was only one academy in all Switzerland, namely, at Basle; nor had it existed longer than fifty years, having been founded by Pope Pius II. (Aeneas Sylvius) in the middle of the fifteenth century. There were numerous colleges of canons, it is true, and convents of men, richly endowed, and meant in part to be nurseries of scholars and theologians, but these establishments had now become nothing better than retreats of epicurism, and nests of ignorance. In particular the Abbey of St. Gall, formerly a renowned school of learning, to which the sons of princes and great lords were sent to be taught, and which in the eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, had sent forth many learned men, had by this time fallen into inefficiency, and indeed into barbarism. John Schmidt, or Faber, vicar of the Bishop of Constance, and a noted polemic of the day, as well as a great enemy of the Reformation and the Reformers, publicly avowed, in a dispute he had with Zwingle, that he knew just a little Greek, but knew nothing whatever of Hebrew.⁷ It need not surprise us that the common priests were so illiterate, when even the Popes themselves,

⁵Hottinger, tom. 3, p. 125; apud Ruchat.

⁶Ibid., tom. 3, pp. 285, 286.

⁷Zwingle., Oper., tom. 2, p. 613.

the princes of the Church, were hardly more learned. A Roman Catholic author has candidly confessed that “there have been many Popes so ignorant that they knew nothing at all of grammar.”⁸

As regards theology, the divines of those days aimed only at becoming adepts in the scholastic philosophy. They knew but one book in the world, to them the sum of all knowledge, the fountain-head of all truth, the “Sentences “of Peter Lombard. While the Bible lay beside them unopened, the pages of Peter Lombard were diligently studied. If they wished to alternate their reading they turned, not to Scripture, but to the writings of Scotus or Thomas Aquinas. These authors were their life-long study; to sit at the feet of Isaiah, or David, or John, to seek the knowledge of salvation at the pure sources of truth, was never thought of by them. Their great authority was Aristotle, not St. Paul. In Switzerland there were doctors of divinity who had never read the Holy Scriptures; there were priests and cures who had never seen a Bible all their days.⁹ In the year 1527 the magistrates of Bern wrote to Sebastien de Mont-Faulcon, the last Bishop of Lausanne, saying that a conference was to be held in their city, on religion, at which all points were to be decided by an appeal to Sacred Scripture, and requesting him to come himself, or at least send some of his theologians, to maintain their side of the question. Alas! the perplexity of the good bishop. “I have no person,” wrote he to the lords of Bern, “sufficiently versed in Holy Scripture to assist at such a dispute.” This recalls a yet more ancient fact of a similar kind. In A.D. 680 the Emperor Constantine Pogonatus summoned a General Council (the sixth) to be held in his capital in Barbary. The Pope of the day, Agatho, wrote to Constantine, excusing the non-attendance of the Italian bishops, on the score “that he could not find in all Italy a single ecclesiastic sufficiently acquainted with the inspired Oracles to send to the Council.”¹⁰ But if this century had few copies of the Word of Life, it had armies of monks; it had an astoundingly long list of saints, to whose honour every day new shrines were erected; and it had churches, to which the splendor of their architecture and the pomp of their ceremonies gave an imposing magnificence, while the

⁸Alphons de Castro adv. Haeres, lib. 1, cap. 4; apud Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 21.

⁹Hottinger, apud Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 22.

¹⁰Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 22. Mosheim, cent. 7, pt. 2, chap. 5.

bull of Boniface V. took care that they should not want frequentors, for in this century was passed the infamous law which made the churches places of refuge for malefactors of every description.

[414] The few who studied the Scriptures were contemned as ignoble souls who were content to plod along on the humblest road, and who lacked the ambition to climb to the sublimer heights of knowledge. "Bachelor" was the highest distinction to which they could attain, whereas the study of the "Sentences" opened to others the path to the coveted honour of "Doctor of Divinity." The priests had succeeded in making it be believed that the study of the Bible was necessary neither for the defense of the Church, nor for the salvation of her individual members, and that for both ends Tradition sufficed. "In what peace and concord would men have lived," said the Vicar of Constance, "if the Gospel had never been heard of in the world!" ¹¹

The great Teacher has said that God must be worshipped "in spirit and in truth:" not in "spirit" only, but in "truth," even that which God has revealed. Consequently when that "truth" was hidden, worship became impossible. Worship after this was simply masquerade. The priest stood up before the people to make certain magical signs with his fingers, or to mutter unintelligible words between his teeth, or to vociferate at the utmost pitch of his voice. Of a like character were the religious acts enjoined on the people. Justice, mercy, humility, and the other virtues of early times were of no value. All holiness lay in prostrating one's self before an image, adoring a relic, purchasing an indulgence, performing a pilgrimage, or paying one's tithes. This was the devotion, these were the graces that lent their glory to the ages in which the Roman faith was in the ascendant. The baron could not ride out till he had donned his coat of mail, lest he should be assailed by his neighbor baron: the peasant tilled the earth, or herded his oxen, with the collar of his master round his neck: the merchant could not pass from fair to fair, but at the risk of being plundered: the robber and the murderer waylaid the passenger who traveled without an escort, and the blood of man was continually flowing in private quarrels, and on the battle-field; but the times, doubtless, were eminently holy, for all around wherever one looked

[415] one beheld the symbols of devotion-crosses, pardons, privileged

[416] ¹¹Zwing, *Oper.*, tom. 2, p.622

shrines, images, relics, aves, cowls, girdles, and palmer-staffs, and all the machinery which the “religion” of the times had invented to make all things holy-earth, air, and water - everything, in short, save the soul of man. Polydore Virgil, an Italian, and a good Catholic, wishing to pay a compliment to the piety of those of whom he was speaking, said, “they had more confidence in their images than in Jesus Christ himself, whom the image represents.”¹²

Within the “Church” there was seen only a scramble for temporalities; such as might be seen in a city abandoned to pillage, where each strives to appropriate the largest share of the spoil. The ecclesiastical benefices were put up to auction, in effect, and knocked down to the highest bidder. This was found to be the easiest way of gathering the gold of Christendom, and pouring it into the great treasury at Rome-that treasury into which, like another sea, flowed all the rivers of the earth, and yet like the sea it never was full. Some of the Popes tried to reduce the scandal, but the custom was too deeply rooted to yield to even their authority. Martin V., in concert with the Council of Constance, enacted a perpetual constitution, which declared all simoniacs, whether open or secret, excommunicated. His successor Eugenius and the Council of Basle ratified this constitution. It is a fact, nevertheless, that during the Pontificate of Pope Martin the sale of benefices continued to flourish.¹³ Finding they could not suppress the practice, the Popes evidently thought that their next best course was to profit by it. The rights of the chapters and patrons were abolished, and bands of needy priests were seen crossing the Alps, with Papal briefs in their hands, demanding admission into vacant benefices. From all parts of Switzerland came loud complaints that the churches had been invaded by strangers. Of the numerous body of canons attached to the cathedral church of Geneva, in 1527, one only was a native, all the rest were foreigners.¹⁴

¹²De Invent rer., lib. 6: 13: “Imaginibus magis fidunt, quam Christo ipsi;” apud Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 24.

¹³The sale of benefices was as ordinary an affair, says Ruchat (tom. 1, p. 26), “que celle des cochons au march³ -as that of swine in a market.

¹⁴Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 26.

Chapter 3: Corruption of the Swiss Church

The Government of the Pope—How the Shepherd Fed his Sheep—Texts from Aquinas and Aristotle—Preachers and their Sermons—Council of Meudon and the Vicar—Canons of Neufchatel—Passion-plays—Excommunication employed against Debtors—Invasion of the Magistrates’ Jurisdiction—Lausanne—Beauty of its Site—Frightful Disorder of its Clergy—Geneva and other Swiss Towns—A Corrupt Church the greatest Scourge of the World—Cry for Reform—The Age turns away from the True Reform—A Cry that waxes Louder, and a Corruption that waxes Stronger

Picture: Swiss Peasant Family

Over the Churches of Switzerland, as over those of the rest of Europe, the Pope had established a tyranny. He built this usurpation on such make-believes as the “holy chair,” the “Vicar of Jesus Christ,” and the “infallibility” thence deduced. He regulated all things according to his pleasure. He forbade the people to read the Scriptures. He every day made new ordinances, to the destruction of the laws of God; and all priests, bishops not excepted, he bound to obey him by an oath of peculiar stringency. The devices were infinite—annats, reservations, tithes (double and treble), amulets, dispensations, pardons, rosaries, relics—by which provision was made whereby the humblest sheep, in the remotest corner of the vast fold of the Pope, might send yearly to Rome a money acknowledgment of the allegiance he owed to that great shepherd, whose seat was on the banks of the Tiber, but whose iron crook reached to the extremities of Christendom.

But was that shepherd equally alive to what he owed the flock? Was the instruction which he took care to provide them with wholesome and abundant? Is it to the pastures of the Word that he conducted them? The priests of those days had no Bible; how then could they communicate to others what they had not learned themselves?

If they entered a pulpit, it was to rehearse a fable, to narrate a legend, or to repeat a stale jest; and they deemed their oratory amply repaid, if their audience gaped at the one and laughed at the other. If a text was announced, it was selected, not from Scripture, but from Scotus, or Thomas Aquinas, or the Moral Philosophy of Aristotle. ¹ Could grapes grow on such a tree, or sweet waters issue from such a fountain?

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But, in truth, few priests were so adventurous as to mount a pulpit, or attempt addressing a congregation. The most part were dumb. They left the duty of story-telling, or preaching, to the monks, and in particular to the Mendicants. "I must record," says the historian Ruchat, "a fact to the honour of the Council of Moudon. Not a little displeased at seeing that the cure of the town was a dumb pastor, who left his parishioners without instruction, the Council, in November, 1535, ordered him to explain, at least to the common people, the Ten Commandments of the Law of God, every Sabbath, after the celebration of the office of the mass." ² Whether the cure's theological acquirements enabled him to fulfill the Council's injunction we do not know. He might have pleaded, as a set-off to his own indolence, a yet more scandalous neglect of duty to be witnessed not far off. At Neufchatel, so pleasantly situated at the foot of the Jura Alps, with its lake reflecting on its tranquil bosom the image of the vine-clad heights that environ it, was a college of canons. These ecclesiastics lived in grand style, for the foundation was rich, the air pleasant, and the wine good. But, says Ruchat, "it looked as if they were paid to keep silence, for, though they were many, there was not one of them all that could preach." ³

In those enlightened days, the ballad-singers and play-wrights supplemented the deficiencies of the preachers. The Church held it dangerous to put into the hands of the people the vernacular Gospel, lest they should read in their own tongue of the wondrous birth at Bethlehem, and the not less wondrous death on Calvary, with all that lay between. But the Passion, and other Biblical events, were turned into comedies and dramas, and acted in public-with how much edification to the spectators, one may guess! In the year 1531,

¹Ruchat, tom. 1 p. 27.

²Arch. de Moud. Registr.; apud Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 27.

³Ibid.

the Council of Moudon gave ten florins of Savoy to a company of tragedians, who played the “Passion” on Palm Sunday, and the “Resurrection” on Easter Monday.⁴ “If Luther had not come,” said a German abbe, calling to mind this and similar occurrences- “If Luther had not come, the Pope by this time would have persuaded men to feed themselves on dust.”

A raging greed, like a burning thirst, tormented the clergy, from their head downwards. Each several order became the scourge of the one beneath it. The inferior clergy, pillaged by the superior, as the superior by their Sovereign Priest at Rome, fleeced in their turn those under them. “Having bought,” says the historian of the Swiss Reformation, “the Church in gross, they sold it in detail.”⁵ Money, money was the mystic potency that set agoing and kept working the machine of Romanism. There were churches to be dedicated, cemeteries to be consecrated, bells to be baptised: all this must be paid for. There were infants to be christened, marriages to be blessed, and the dead to be buried: nothing of all this could be done without money. There were masses to be said for the repose of the soul; there were victims to be rescued from the raging flames of purgatory: it was vain to think of doing this without money. There was, moreover, the privilege of sepulture in the floor of the church-above all, near the altar, where the dead man mouldered in ground preeminently holy, and the prayers offered for him were specially efficacious: that was worth a great sum, and a heavy price was charged for it. There were those who wished to eat flesh in Lent, or in forbidden times, and there were those who felt it burdensome to fast at any season: well, the Church had arranged to meet the wishes of both, only, as was reasonable, such accommodation must be paid for. All needed pardon: well, here it is-a plenary pardon; the pardon of all one’s sins up to the hour of one’s death-but first the price has to be paid down. Well, the price has been paid; the soul has taken its departure, fortified with a plenary absolution; but this has to be rendered yet more plenary by the payment of a supplemental sum-though why, we cannot well say, for now we touch the borders of a subject which is shrouded in mystery, and which no Romish theologian has attempted

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 29.

to make plain. In short, as said the poet Mantuan,⁶ the Church of Rome is an “enormous market, stocked with all sorts of wares, and regulated by the same laws which govern all the other markets of the world. The man who comes to it with money may have everything; but, alas! for him who comes without money, he can have nothing.” [418]

Every one knows how simple was the discipline of the early Church, and how spiritual the ends to which it was directed. The pastors of those days wielded it only to guard the doctrine of the Church from the corruption of error, and her communion from the contamination of scandalous persons. For far different ends was the Church’s discipline employed in the fifteenth century in Switzerland, and other countries of Europe. One abuse of it, very common, was to employ it for compelling payment of debts. The creditor went to the bishop and took out an excommunication against his debtor. To the poor debtor this was a much more formidable affair than any civil process. The penalties reached the soul as well as the body, and extended beyond the grave. The magistrate had often to interfere, and forbid a practice which was not more an oppression of the citizen, than a manifest invasion of his own jurisdiction. We find the Council of Moudon, 7th July, 1532, forbidding a certain Antoine Jayet, chaplain and vicar of the church, to execute any such interdiction against any layman of the town and parish of Moudon, and promising to guarantee him against all consequences before his superiors. Nor was it long till the Council had to make good their guarantee; for the same month, the vicar having failed to execute one of these interdictions against a burgess of Moudon, the Council deputed two of their number to defend him before the chapter at Lausanne, which had summoned him before it to answer for his disobedience.⁷ A frequent consequence was that corpses remained unburied. If the husband died under excommunication for debt, the wife could not consign his body to the grave, nor the son that of the father. The excommunication must first be revoked.⁸

⁶“Venalia Romae Tempia, Sacerdotes, Altaria, Sacra, Coronae, Ignis, Thura, Preces, Coelum est venale, Deusque.”(At Rome are on sale, temples, priests, altars, mitres, crowns, fire [or, excommunications], incense, prayers, heaven, and God himself.)

⁷Arch. de Moud. Registr.; apud Ruchat, 1, 30.

⁸Ibid.

This prostitution of ecclesiastical discipline was of very common occurrence, and inflicted a grievance that was widely felt, not only at the epoch of the Reformation, but all through the fifteenth century. It was one of the many devices by which the Roman Church worked her way underneath the temporal power, and filched from it its rightful jurisdiction. Thrones, judgment-seats, in short, the whole machinery of civil government that Church left standing, but she contrived to place her own functionaries in these chairs of rule. She talked loftily of the kingly dignity, she styled princes the “anointed of heaven;” but she deprived their sceptres of all real power by the crosiers of her bishops. In the year 1480 we find the inhabitants of the Pays-de-Vaud complaining to Philibert, Duke of Savoy, their liege lord, that his subjects who had the misfortune to be in debt were made answerable, not in his courts, but to the officer of the Bishop of Lausanne, by whom they were visited with the penalty of excommunication. The duke did not take the matter so quietly as many others. He fulminated a decree, dated “Chamber, August 31st,” against this usurpation of his jurisdiction on the part of the bishop. ⁹

It remains only that we touch on what was the saddest part of the corruption of those melancholy days, the libertinism of the clergy. Its frightful excess makes the full and open exposure of the scandal impossible. Oftener than once did the Swiss cantons complain that their spiritual guides led worse lives than the laymen, and that, while they went about their church performances with an indevotion and coldness that shocked the pious, they gave themselves up to profanity, drunkenness, gluttony, and uncleanness. ¹⁰

We shall let the men who then lived, and who witnessed this corruption, and suffered from it, describe it. In the year 1477, some time after the election of Benedict of Montferrand to the Bishopric of Lausanne, the Bernese came to him on the 2nd of August, to complain of their clergy, whose irregularities they were no longer able to bear. “We see clearly,” said they, “that the clergy of our land are extremely debauched, and given up to impurity, and that they practice their wickedness openly, without any feeling of shame. They

⁹Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 31.

¹⁰“L’impiete, l’ivrognerie, la gourmandise et l’impurete, etaient parmi eux a leur comble; ils le portaient plus loin que les laiques.” (Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 32.)

keep their concubines, they resort at night to houses of debauchery; and they do all this with so much boldness, that it is plain they have neither honour nor conscience, and are not restrained by the fear either of God or man. This afflicts us extremely. Our ancestors have often made police regulations to arrest these disorders, particularly when they saw that the ecclesiastical tribunals gave themselves no care about the matter.” A similar complaint was lodged, in the year 1500, against the monks of the Priory of Grandson, by the lords of Bern and Friburg.¹¹ But to what avail? Despite these complaints and police regulations, the manners of the clergy remained unreformed: the salt had lost its savor, and wherewith could it be salted? The law of corruption is to become yet more corrupt.

So would it assuredly have been in Switzerland—from its corruption, corruption only would have come in endless and ever grosser developments—had not Protestantism come to sow with beneficent hand, and quicken with heavenly breath, in the bosom of society, the seeds from which was to spring a new life. Men needed not laws to amend the old, but a power to create the new.

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The examples we have given—and it is the violence of the malady that illustrates the power of the physician—are sufficiently deplorable; but sad as they are, they fade from view and pass from memory in presence of this one enormity, which an ancient document has handed down to us, and which we must glance at; for we shall only glance, not dwell, on the revolting spectacle. It will give us some idea of the frightful moral gulf in which Switzerland was sunk, and how inevitable would have been its ruin had not the arm of the Reformation plucked it from the abyss.

On the northern shore of Lake Lemman stands the city of Lausanne. Its site is one of the grandest in Switzerland. Crowned with its cathedral towers, the city looks down on the noble lake, which sweeps along in a mighty crescent of blue, from where Geneva on its mount of rock is dimly descried in the west, till it bathes the feet of the two mighty Alps, the Dent du Midi and the Dent de Morcele, which like twin pillars guard the entrance to the Rhone valley. Near it, on this side, the country is one continuous vineyard, from amid which hamlets and towns sweetly look out. Yonder, just dipping into

¹¹ Arch. de Bern. et MS. amp., p. 18; apud Ruchat, 1, 33.

the lake, is the donjon of Chillon, recalling the story of Bonnevard, to whose captivity within its wails the genius of Byron has given a wider than a merely Swiss fame. And beyond, on the other side of the lake, is Savoy, a rolling country, clothed with noble forests and rich pastures, and walled in on the far distance, on the southern horizon, by the white peaks of the Alps. But what a blot in this fair scene was Lausanne! We speak of the Lausanne of the sixteenth century. In the year 1533 the Lausanneese preferred a list of twenty-three charges against their canons and priests, and another of seven articles against their bishop, Sebastien de Mont-Faulcon. Ruchat has given the document in full, article by article, but parts of it will not bear translation in these pages, so, giving those it concerns the benefit of this difficulty, we take the liberty of presenting it in an abridged form. ¹²

The canons and priests, according to the statement of their parishioners, sometimes quarrelled when saying their offices, and fought in the church.

The citizens who came to join in the cathedral service were, on occasion, treated by the canons to a fight, and stabbed with poignards. Certain ecclesiastics had slain two of the citizens in one day, but no reckoning had been held with them for the deed. The canons, especially, were notorious for their profligacy. Masked and disguised as soldiers, they sallied out into the streets at night, brandishing naked swords, to the terror, and at times the effusion of the blood, of those they encountered. They sometimes attacked the citizens in their own houses, and when threatened with ecclesiastical inflictions, denied the bishop's power and his right to pronounce excommunication upon them. Certain of them had been visited with excommunication, but they went on saying mass as before. In short, the clergy were just as bad as they could possibly be, and there was no crime of which many of them had not at one time or another been guilty.

The citizens further complained that, when the plague visited Lausanne, ¹³ many had been suffered to die without confession and

¹²“Taken,” says Ruchat, “from an original paper, which has been communicated to me by M. Olivier, chateelain of La Sarraz.”

¹³Two or three years before the occurrence of this plague, a pestilence had raged in Lausanne and its environs. (Ruchat.)

the Sacrament. The priests could hardly plead in excuse an excess of work, seeing they found time to gamble in the taverns, where they seasoned their talk with oaths, or cursed some unlucky throw of the dice. They revealed confessions, were adroit at the framing of testaments, and made false entries in their own favor. They were the governors of the hospital, and their management had resulted in a great impoverishment of its revenues.

Unhappily, Lausanne was not an exceptional case. It exhibits the picture of what Geneva and Neufchatel and other towns of the Swiss Confederacy in those days were, although, we are glad to be able to say, not in so aggravated a degree. Geneva, to which, when touched by the Reformed light, there was to open a future so different, lay plunged at this moment in disorders, under its bishop, Pierre de la Baume, and stood next to Lausanne in the notoriety it had achieved by the degeneracy of its manners. But it is needless to particularize. All round that noble lake which, with its smiling banks and its magnificent mountain boundaries—here the Jura, there the White Alps—forms so grand a feature of Switzerland, were villages and towns, from which went out a cry not unlike that which ascended from the Cities of the Plain in early days.

This is but a partial lifting of the veil. Even conceding that these are extreme cases, still, what a terrible conclusion do they force upon us as regards the moral state of Christendom! And when we think that these polluting streams flowed from the sanctuary, and the instrumentality ordained by God for the purification of society had become the main means of corrupting it, we are taught that, in some respects, the world has more to fear from the admixture of Christianity with error than the Church has. It was the world that first brought this corruption into the Church; but see what a terrible retaliation the Church now takes upon the world!

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One does not wonder that there is heard on every side, at this era, an infinite number of voices, lay and cleric, calling for the Reformation of the Church. Yet the majority of those from whom these demands came were but groping in the dark. But God never leaves himself without a witness. A century before this, he had put before the world, in the ministry of Wicliffe, plain, clear, and demonstrated, the one only plan of a true Reformation. Putting his finger upon the page of the New Testament, Wicliffe said: Here it is;

here is what you seek. You must forget the past thousand years; you must look at what is written on this page; you will find in this Book the Pattern of the Reformation of the Church; and not the Pattern only, but the Power by which that Reformation can alone be realised.

But the age would not look at it. Men said, Can any good thing come out of this Book? The Bible did well enough as the teacher of the Christians of the first century; but its maxims are no longer applicable, its models are antiquated. We of the fifteenth century require something more profound, and more suited to the times. They turned their eyes to Popes, to emperors, to councils. These, alas! were hills from which no help could come. And so for another century the call for Reformation went on, gathering strength with every passing year, as did also the corruption. The two went on by equal stages, the cry waxing ever the louder and the corruption growing ever the stronger, till at length it was seen that there was no help in man. Then He who is mighty came down to deliver.

Chapter 4: Zwingle's Birth and School-Days

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One Leader in Germany—Many in Switzerland—Valley of
Tockenbourg—Village of Wildhaus—Zwingle's Birth—His
Parentage—Swiss Shepherds—Winter Evenings—Traditions of
Swiss Valour—Zwingle Listens—Sacred Traditions—Effect of
Scenery in moulding Zwingle's Character—Sent to School at
Wesen—Outstrips his Teacher—Removed to
Basle—Binzli—Zwingle goes to
Bern—Lupillus—The Dominicans—Zwingle narrowly escapes
being a Monk

Picture: View in Zurich

There is an apt resemblance between the physical attributes of the land in which we are now arrived, and the eventful story of its religious awakening. Its great snow-clad hills are the first to catch the light of morning, and to announce the rising of the sun. They are seen burning like torches, while the mists and shadows still cover the plains and valleys at their feet. So of the moral dawn of the Swiss. Three hundred years ago, the cities of this land were among the first in Europe to kindle in the radiance of the Reformed faith, and to announce the new morning which was returning to the world. There suddenly burst upon the darkness a multitude of lights. In Germany there was but one pre-eminent center, and one pre-eminently great leader. Luther towered up like some majestic Alp. Alone over all that land was seen his colossal figure. But in Switzerland one, and another, and a third stood up, and like Alpine peaks, catching the first rays, they shed a bright and pure effulgence not only upon their own cities and cantons, but over all Christendom.

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In the south-east of Switzerland is the long and narrow valley of the Tockenbourg. It is bounded by lofty mountains, which divide it on the north from the canton of Appenzell, and on the south from the Grisons. On the east it opens toward the Tyrolese Alps. Its high level does not permit the grain to ripen or the vine to be cultivated

in it, but its rich pastures were the attraction of shepherds, and in process of time the village of Wildhaus grew up around its ancient church. In this valley, in a cottage which is still to be seen ¹ standing about a mile from the church, on a green meadow, its walls formed of the stems of trees, its roof weighed down with stones to protect it from the mountain gusts, with a limpid stream flowing before it, there lived three hundred years ago a man named Huldric Zwingle, bailiff of the parish. He had eight sons, the third of whom was born on New Year's day, 1584, seven weeks after the birth of Luther, and was named Ulric. ²

The man was greatly respected by his neighbors for his upright character as well as for his office. He was a shepherd, and his summers were passed on the mountains, in company with his sons, who aided him in tending his flocks. When the green of spring brightened the vales, the herds were brought forth and driven to pasture. Day by day, as the verdure mounted higher on the mountain's side, the shepherds with their flocks continued to ascend. Midsummer found them at their highest elevation, their herds browsing on the skirts of the eternal snows, where the melting ice and the vigorous sun of July nourished a luxuriant herbage. When the lengthening nights and the fading pasturage told them that summer had begun to decline, they descended by the same stages as they had mounted, arriving at their dwellings in the valley about the time of the autumnal equinox. In Switzerland so long as winter holds its reign on the mountain-tops, and darkens the valleys with mists and tempests, no labor can be done out of doors, especially in high-lying localities like the Tocken-burg. Then the peasants assemble by turns in each other's houses, lit at night by a blazing fire of fir-wood or the gleam of candle. Gathering round the hearth, they beguile the long evenings with songs and musical instruments, or stories of olden days. They will tell of some adventurous exploit, when the shepherd climbed the precipice, or braved the tempest, to rescue some member of the fold which had strayed from its companions. Or they will narrate some yet braver

¹Christoffel, Zwingli, or Rise of the Reformation in Switzerland, p. 1; Clark's ed., Edin., 1858. D'Aubigne, bk. 8, chap. 1.

²Pallavicino asserts that he was obscurely born—"nato bassamente" (tom. 1, lib. 1, cap. 19). His family was ancient and highly respected (Gerdesius, p. 101) - "Issu d'une honnete et ancienne famille," says Ruchat (tom. 1, p. 71).

deed done on the battle-field where their fathers were wont to meet the spearmen of Austria, or the steel-clad warriors of Gaul. Thus would they make the hours pass swiftly by.

The house of the Amman of Wildhaus, Huldric Zwingle, was a frequent resort of his neighbors in the winter evenings. Round his hearth would assemble the elders of the village, and each brought his tale of chivalry borrowed from ancient Swiss ballad or story, or mayhap handed down by tradition. While the elders spoke, the young listened with coursing pulse and flashing eyes. They told of the brave men their mountains had produced of old; of the feats of valor which had been done upon their soil; and how their own valley of the Tockenburg had sent forth heroes who had helped to roll back from their hills the hosts of Charles the Bold. The battles of their fathers were fought over again in the simple yet graphic narratives of the sons. The listeners saw these deeds enacted before them. They beheld the fierce foreign phalanxes gathering round their mountains. They saw their sires mustering in city and on mountain, they saw them hurrying through narrow gorge, and shady pine-forest, and across their lakes, to repel the invader; they heard the shock of the encounter, the clash of battle, the shout of victory, and saw the confusion and terrors of the rout. Thus the spirit of Swiss valor was kept alive; bold sire was succeeded by son as bold; and the Alps, as they kindled their fires morning by morning, beheld one generation of patriots and warriors rise up after another at their feet.

In the circle of listeners round his father's hearth in the winter evenings was the young Ulric Zwingle. He was thrilled by these tales of the deeds of ancient valor, some of them done in the very valley where he heard them rehearsed. His country's history, not in printed page, but in tragic action, passed before him. He could see the forms of its heroes moving grandly along. They had fought, and bled, centuries ago; their ashes had long since mingled with the dust of the vale, or been borne away by the mountain torrent; but to him they were still living. They never could die. If that soil which spring brightened with its flowers, and autumn so richly covered with its fruits, was free-if yonder snows, which kindled so grandly on the mountain's brow, owned no foreign lord, it was to these men that this was owing. This glorious land inhabited by freemen was their eternal monument. Every object in it was to him associated with their

names, and recalled them to his memory. To be worthy of his great ancestors, to write his name alongside theirs, and have his exploits similarly handed down from father to son, became henceforward his highest ambition. This brave, lofty, liberty-loving nature, which strengthened from year to year, was a fit stock on which to graft the love of a yet higher liberty, and the detestation of a yet baser tyranny than any which their fathers had repelled with the scorn of freemen when they routed the phalanxes of the Hapsburg, or the legionaries of France.

And betimes this liberty began to be disclosed to him. His grandmother was a pious woman. She would call the young Ulric to her, and making him sit beside her, would introduce him to heroes of a yet loftier type, by reciting to him such portions of sacred history as she herself had learned from the legends of the Church, and the lessons of the Breviary. She would tell him, doubtless, of those grand patriarchal shepherds who fed their flocks on the hills of Palestine of old, and how at times an August Being came down and talked with them. She would tell him of those mighty men of valor from the plough, the sheepfold, or the vineyard, who, when the warriors of Midian, crossing the Jordan, darkened with their swarms the broad Esdraelon, or the hordes of Philistia, from the plain by the sea-shore, climbed the hills of Judah, drove back the invading hosts, and sent them with slaughter and terror to their homes. She would take him to the cradle at Bethlehem, to the cross on Calvary, to the garden on the morning of the third day, when the doors of the sepulcher were seen to open, and a glorious form walked forth from the darkness of the tomb. She would show him the first missionaries hurrying away with the great news to the Gentile world, and would tell him how the idols of the nations fell at the preaching of the Gospel. Thus day by day was the young Zwingle trained for his great future task. Deep in his heart was laid the love of his country, and next were implanted the rudiments of that faith which alone could be the shield of his country's stable and lasting independence.

The grand aspects of nature around him - the tempest's roar, the cataract's dash, the mountain peaks-doubtless contributed their share to the forming of the future Reformer. They helped to nurse that elevation of soul, that sublime awe of Him who had "set fast the mountains," and that intrepidity of mind which distinguished

Zwingle in after-years. So thinks his biographer. "I have often thought in my simplicity," says Oswald My-conius,³ "that from these sublime heights, which stretch up towards heaven, he has taken something heavenly and sublime." "When the thunder rolls through the gorges of the mountains, and leaps from crag to crag with crashing roar, then it is as if we heard anew the voice of the Lord God proclaiming, 'I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' When in the dawn of morning the icy mountains glow in light divine, so that a sea of fire seems to surround all their tops, it is as if 'the Lord God of hosts treadeth upon the high places of the earth,' and as if the border of his garment of light had transfigured the hills. It is then that with reverential awe we feel as if the cry came to us also, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.' Here under the magnificent impressions of a mountain world and its wonders, there awoke in the breast of the young Zwingle the first awful sense of the grandeur and majesty of God, which afterwards filled his whole soul, and armed him with intrepidity in the great conflict with the powers of darkness. In the solitude of the mountains, broken only by the bells of his pasturing flocks, the reflective boy mused on the wisdom of God which reveals itself in all creatures. An echo of this deep contemplation of nature, which occupied his harmless youth, we find in a work which, in the ripeness of manhood, he composed on 'The Providence of God.'⁴ 'The earth,' says he, 'the mother of all, shuts never ruthlessly her rich treasures within herself; she heeds not the wounds made on her by spade and share. The dew, the rain, the rivers moisten, restore, quicken within her that which had been brought to a stand-still in growth by drought, and its after-thriving testifies wondrously of the Divine power. The mountains, too, these awkward, rude, inert masses, that give to the earth, as the bones to the flesh, solidity, form, and consistency, that render impossible, or at least difficult, the passage from one place to another, which, although heavier than the earth itself, are yet so far above it, and never sink, do they not

³Oswald Myconius, Vit. Zwing. Not to be confounded with Myconius the friend and biographer of Luther.

⁴De Providentia Dei.

proclaim the imperishable might of Jehovah, and speak forth the whole volume of his majesty?"⁵

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His father marked with delight the amiable disposition, the truthful character, and the lively genius of his son, and began to think that higher occupations awaited him than tending focks on his native mountains. The new day of letters was breaking over Europe. Some solitary rays had penetrated into the secluded valley of the Tocken-burg, and awakened aspirations in the bosom of its shepherds. The Bailiff of Wildhaus, we may be sure, shared in the general impulse which was moving men towards the new dawn.

His son Ulric was now in his eighth or ninth year. It was necessary to provide him with better instruction than the valley of the Tocken-burg could supply. His uncle was Dean of Wesen, and his father resolved to place him under his superintendence. Setting out one day on their way to Wesen, the father and son climbed the green summits of the Ammon, and now from these heights the young Ulric had his first view of the world lying around his native valley of the Tocken-burg. On the south rose the snowy crests of the Oberland. He could almost look down into the valley of Glarus, which was to be his first charge; more to the north were the wooded heights of Einsiedeln, and beyond them the mountains which enclose the lovely waters of Zurich.

The Dean of Wesen loved his brother's child as his own son. He sent him to the public school of the place. The genius of the boy was quick, his capacity large, but the stores of the teacher were slender. Soon he had communicated to his pupil all he knew himself, and it became necessary to send Zwingle to another school. His father and his uncle took counsel together, and selected that of Basle.

Ulric now exchanged his grand mountains, with their white peaks, for the carpet-like meadows, watered by the Rhine, and the gentle hills, with their sprinkling of fir-trees, which encompass Basle. Basle was one of those points on which the rising day was concentrating its rays, and whence they were radiated over the countries around. It was the seat of a University. It had numerous printing-presses, which were reproducing the master-pieces of the classic age. It was beginning to be the resort of scholars; and when the

⁵Christoffel, p. 3.

young student from the Tockenburg entered its gates and took up his residence within it, he felt doubtless that he was breathing a new atmosphere.

The young Zwingle was fortunate as regarded the master under whose care he was placed at Basle. Gregory Binzli, the teacher in St. Theodore's School, was a man of mild temper and warm heart, and in these respects very unlike the ordinary pedagogues of the sixteenth century, who studied by a stiff demeanor, a severe countenance, and the terrors of discipline to compel the obedience of their pupils, and inspire them with the love of learning. In this case no spur was needed. The pupil from the Tockenburg made rapid progress here as at Wesen. He shone especially in the mimic debates which the youth of that day, in imitation of the wordy tournaments of their elders, often engaged in, and laid the foundation of that power in disputation which he afterwards wielded on a wider arena.⁶ Again the young Zwingle, distancing his schoolmates, stood abreast of his teacher. It was clear that another school must be found for the pupil of whom the question was not, What is he able to learn but, Where shall we find one qualified to teach him?⁷

The Bailiff of Wildhaus and the Dean of Wesen once more took counsel touching the young scholar, the precocity of whose genius had created for them this embarrassment. The most distinguished school at that time in all Switzerland was that of Bern, where Henry Woelflin, or Lupullus, taught, with great applause, the dead languages. Thither it was resolved to send the boy. Bidding adieu for a time to the banks of the Rhine, Zwingle recrossed the Jura, and stood once more in sight of those majestic snowy piles, which had been in a sort his companions from his infancy. Morning and night he could gaze upon the pyramidal forms of the Shrekhorn and the Eiger, on the tall peak of the Finster Aarhorn, on the mighty Blumlis Alp, and overtopping them all, the Jungfrau, kindling into glory at the sun's departure, and burning in light long after the rest had vanished in darkness.

But it was the lessons of the school that engrossed him. His teacher was accomplished beyond the measure of his day. He had

⁶Osw. Mycon., Vit. Zwing.

⁷Christoffel, p. 5.

traveled over Italy and Greece, and had extended his tour as far as Syria and the Holy Sepulchre. He had not merely feasted his eyes upon their scenery, he had mastered the long-forgotten tongues of these celebrated countries. He had drunk in the spirit of the Roman and Greek orators and poets, and the fervor of ancient liberty and philosophy he communicated to his pupils along with the literature in which they were contained. The genius of Zwingli expanded under so sympathetic a master. Lupullus initiated him into the art of verse-making after the ancient models. His poetic vein was developed, and his style now began to assume that classic terseness and chastened glow which marked it in after-years. Nor was his talent for music neglected.

[425] But the very success of the young scholar was like to have cut short his career, or fatally changed its direction. With his faculties just opening into blossom, he was in danger of disappearing in a convent. Luther at a not unsimilar stage of his career had buried himself in the cell, and would never have been heard of more, had not a great storm arisen in his soul and compelled him to leave it. If Zwingli shall bury himself as Luther did, will he be rescued as Luther was? But how came he into this danger?

In Bern, as everywhere else, the Dominicans and the Franciscans were keen competitors, the one against the other, for public favor. Their claims to patronage were mainly such as these—a showy church, a gaudy dress, an attractive ceremonial; and if they could add to these a wonder-working image, their triumph was almost secured. The Dominicans now thought that they saw a way by which they would mortify their rivals the Franciscans. They had heard of the scholar of Lupullus. He had a fine voice, he was quick-witted, and altogether such a youth as would be a vast acquisition to their order. Could they only enrol him in their ranks, it would do more than a fine altar-piece, or a new ceremonial, to draw crowds to their chapel, and gifts to their treasury. They invited him to take up his abode in their convent as a novitiate.⁸

Intelligence reached the Amman of Wildhaus of the snares which the Dominicans of Bern were laying for his son. He had imagined a future for him in which, like his uncle the dean, he would be seen

⁸Bullinger, Chron.

discharging with dignity the offices of his Church; but to wear a cowl, to become the mere decoy-duck of monks, to sink into a pantomimic performer, was an idea that found no favor in the eyes of the bailiff. He spoilt the scheme of the Dominicans, by sending his commands to his son to return forthwith to his home in the Tockenburg. The Hand that led Luther into the convent guided Zwingle past it.

Chapter 5: Zwingle's Progress Towards Emancipation

Zwingle returns Home—Goes to Vienna—His Studies and Associates.—Returns to Wildhaus—Makes a Second Visit to Basle—His Love of Music—The Scholastic Philosophy—Leo Juda—Wolfgang Capito—Ecolampadius—Erasmus—Thomas Wittenbach—Stars of the Dawn.—Zwingle becomes Pastor of Olarus—Studies and Labours among his Parishioners—Swiss drawn to Fight in Italy—Zwingle's Visit to Italy.—Its Lessons

Picture: Zwingle among his Friends

Picture: OEcolampadius

The young Zwingle gave instant obedience to the injunction that summoned him home; but he was no longer the same as when he first left his father's house. He had not yet become a disciple of the Gospel, but he had become a scholar. The solitudes of the Tockenurg had lost their charm for him; neither could the society of its shepherds any longer content him. He longed for more congenial fellowship.

Zwingle, by the advice of his uncle, was next sent to Vienna, in Austria. He entered the high school of that city, which had attained great celebrity under the Emperor Maximilian I. Here he resumed those studies in the Roman classics which had been so suddenly broken off in Bern, adding thereto a beginning in philosophy. He was not the only Swiss youth now living in the capital and studying in the schools of the ancient enemy of his country's independence. Joachim Vadian, the son of a rich merchant of St. Gall; Henry Loreti, commonly known as Glarean, a peasant's son, from Mollis; and a Suabian youth, John Heigerlin, the son of a blacksmith, and hence called Faber, were at this time in Vienna, and were Zwingle's companions in his studies and in his amusements. All three gave promise of future eminence; and all three attained it; but no one of the three rendered anything like the same service to the world,

or achieved the same lasting fame, as the fourth, the shepherd's son from the Tockenburg. After a sojourn of two years at Vienna, Zwingle returned once more (1502) to his home at Wildhaus.

But his native valley could not long retain him. The oftener he quaffed the cup of learning, the more he thirsted to drink thereof. Being now in his eighteenth year, he repaired a second time to Basle, in the hope of turning to use, in that city of scholars, the knowledge he had acquired. He taught in the School of St. Martin's, and studied at the University. Here he received the degree of Master of Arts. This title he accepted more from deference to others than from any value which he himself put upon it. At no period did he make use of it, being wont to say, "One is our Master, even Christ." ¹

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Frank and open and joyous, he drew around him a large circle of friends, among whom was Capito, and Leo Juda, who afterwards became his colleague. His intellectual powers were daily expanding. But all was not toil with him; taking his lute or his horn, he would regale himself and his companions with the airs of his native mountains; or he would sally out along the banks of the Rhine, or climb the hills of the Black Forest on the other side of that stream.

To diversify his labours, Zwingle turned to the scholastic philosophy. Writing of him at this period, Myconius says: "He studied philosophy here with more exactness than ever, and pursued into all their refinements the idle, hair-splitting sophistries of the schoolman, with no other intention than that, if ever he should come to close quarters with him, he might know his enemy, and beat him with his own weapons." ² As one who quits a smiling and fertile field, and crosses the boundary of a gloomy wilderness, where nothing grows that is good for food or pleasant to the eye, so did Zwingle feel when he entered this domain. The scholastic philosophy had received the reverence of ages; the great intellects of the preceding centuries had extolled it as the sum of all wisdom. Zwingle found in it only barrenness and confusion; the further he penetrated into it the more waste it became. He turned away, and came back with a keener relish to the study of the classics. There he breathed a freer air, and there he found a wider horizon around him.

¹Christoffel, p. 8.

²Osw. Mycon., Vit. Zwing.

Between the years 1512 and 1516 there chanced to settle in Switzerland a number of men of great and varied gifts, all of whom became afterwards distinguished in the great movement of Reform.

[427] Let us rapidly recount their names. It was not of chance surely that so many lights shone out all at once in the sky of the Swiss. Leo Juda comes first: he was the son of a priest of Alsace. His diminutive stature and sickly face hid a richly replenished intellect, and a bold and intrepid spirit. The most loved of all the friends of Zwingli, he shared his two master-passions, the love of truth and the love of music. When the hours of labor were fulfilled, the two regaled themselves with song. Leo had a treble voice, and struck the tymbal; to the trained skill and powerful voice of Ulric all instruments and all parts came alike. Between them there was formed a covenant of friendship that lasted till death. The hour soon came that parted them, for Leo Juda was the senior of Zwingli, and quitted Basle to become priest at St. Pilt in Alsace. But we shall see them reunited ere long, and fighting side by side, with ripened powers, and weapons taken from the armoury of the Divine Word, in the great battle of the Reformation.

Another of those remarkable men who, from various countries, were now directing their steps to Switzerland, was Wolfgang Capito. He was born at Hagenau in Germany in 1478, and had taken his degree in the three faculties of theology, medicine, and law. In 1512 he was invited to become cure of the cathedral church of Basle. Accepting this charge he set to studying the Epistle to the Romans, [428] in order to expound it to his hearers, and while so engaged his own eyes opened to the errors of the Roman Church. By the end of 1517 so matured had his views become that he found he no longer could say mass, and forbore the practice.³

John Hausschein, or, in its Greek form, Ecolampadius-both of which signify "light of the house"-was born in 1482, at Weinsberg, in Franconia. His family, originally from Basle, was wealthy. So rapid was his progress in the belles lettres, that at the age of twelve he composed verses which were admired for their elegance and fire. He went abroad to study jurisprudence at the Universities of Bologna and Heidelberg. At the latter place he so recommended

³Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 67.

himself by his exemplary conduct and his proficiency in study, that he was appointed preceptor to the son of the Elector Palatine Philip. In 1514 he preached in his own country. His performance elicited an applause from the learned, which he thought it little merited, for he says of it that it was nothing else than a medley of superstition. Feeling that his doctrine was not true, he resolved to study the Greek and Hebrew languages, that he might be able to read the Scriptures in the original. With this view he repaired to Stuttgart, to profit by the instructions of the celebrated scholar Reuchlin, or Capnion. In the year following (1515) Capito, who was bound to Ecolampadius in the ties of all intimate friendship, had made Christopher of Uttenheim, Bishop of Basle, acquainted with his merits, and that prelate addressed to him an invitation to become preacher in that city,⁴ where we shall afterwards meet him.

About the same time the celebrated Erasmus came to Basle, drawn thither by the fame of its printing-presses. He had translated, with simplicity and elegance, the New Testament into Latin from the original Greek, and he issued it from this city, accompanied with clear and judicious notes, and a dedication to Pope Leo X. To Leo the dedication was appropriate as a member of a house which had given many munificent patrons to letters, and no less appropriate ought it to have been to him as head of the Church. The epistle dedicatory is dated Basle, February 1st, 1516. Erasmus enjoyed the aid of Ecolampadius in this labor, and the great scholar acknowledges, in his preface to the paraphrase, with much laudation, his obligations to the theologian.⁵

We name yet another in this galaxy of lights which was rising over the darkness of this land, and of Christendom as well. Though we mention him last, he was the first to arrive. Thomas Wittembach was a native of Bienne, in Switzerland. He studied at Tubingen, and had delivered lectures in its high school. In 1505 he came to that city on the banks of the Rhine, around which its scholars, and its printers scarcely less, were shedding such a halo. It was at the feet of Wittembach that Ulric Zwingle, on his second visit to Basle, found Leo Juda. The student from the Tockenburg sat him down at

⁴Hottinger, 16. Ruchat, tom. 1, pp. 76, 77.

⁵Hottinger, 16, 17. Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 77.

the feet of the same teacher, and no small influence was Wittembach destined to exert over him. Wittembach was a disciple of Reuchlin, the famous Hebraist. Basle had already opened its gates to the learning of Greece and Rome, but Wittembach brought thither a yet higher wisdom. Skilled in the sacred tongues, he had drunk at the fountains of Divine knowledge to which these tongues admitted him. There was an older doctrine, he affirmed, than that which Thomas Aquinas had propounded to the men of the Middle Ages-an older doctrine even than that which Aristotle had taught to the men of Greece. The Church had wandered from that old doctrine, but the time was near when men would come back to it. That doctrine in a single sentence was that “the death of Christ is the only ransom for our souls.”⁶ When these words were uttered, the first seed of a new life had been cast into the heart of Zwingle.

To pause a moment: the names we have recited were the stars of morning. Verily, to the eyes of men that for a thousand years had dwelt in darkness, it was a pleasant thing to behold their light. With literal truth may we apply the words of the great poet to them, and call their effulgence “holy: the offspring of heaven first-born.” Greater luminaries were about to come forth, and fill with their splendor that firmament where these early harbingers of day were shedding their lovely and welcome rays. But never shall these first pure lights be forgotten or blotted out. Many names, which war has invested with a terrible splendor, and which now attract the universal gaze, grow gradually dim, and at last will vanish altogether. But history will trim these “holy lights” from century to century, and keep them burning throughout the ages; and be the world’s day ever so long and ever so bright, the stars that ushered in its dawn will never cease to shine.

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We have seen the seed dropped into the heart of Zwingle; the door now opened by which he was ushered into the field in which his great labours were to be performed. At this juncture the pastor of Glarus died. The Pope appointed his equerry, Henri Goldli, to the vacant office;⁷ for the paltry post on the other side of the

⁶“Jesum Christum nobis a Patre justitiam et satisfactionem pro peccatis mundi factum est” (Jesus Christ is made by the Father our righteousness and the satisfaction for the sins of the world). - Gerdesius, tom. 1, pp. 100-102.

⁷Christoffel, p. 9.

Alps must be utilised. Had it been a groom for their horses, the shepherds of Glarus would most thankfully have accepted the Pope's nominee; but what they wanted was a teacher for themselves and their children, and having heard of the repute of the son of the Bailiff of Wildhaus, their neighbor, they sent back the equerry to his duties in the Pontifical stables, and invited Ulric Zwingle to become their pastor. He accepted the invitation, was ordained at Constance, and in 1506, being then in his twenty-second year, he arrived at Glarus to begin his work. His parish embraced nearly a third of the canton.

“He became a priest,” says Myconius, “and devoted himself with his whole soul to the search after Divine truth, for he was well aware how much he must know to whom the flock of Christ is entrusted.” As yet, however, he was a more ardent student of the ancient classics than of the Holy Scriptures. He read Demosthenes 666 and Cicero, that he might acquire the art of oratory. He was especially ambitious of wielding the mighty power of eloquence. He knew what it had accomplished in the cities of Greece, that it had roused them to resist the tyrant, and assert their liberties: might it not achieve effects as great, and not less needed, in the valleys of Switzerland? Caesar, Livy, Tacitus, and the other great writers of Rome, he was perfectly familiar with. Seneca he called a “holy man.” The beautiful genius, the elevation of soul, and the love of country which distinguished some of the great men of heathendom, he attributed to the influence of the Holy Ghost. God, he affirmed, did not confine his influence within the limits of Palestine, he covered therewith the world. “If the two Catos,” said he, “Scipio and Camillus, had not been truly religious, could they have been so high-minded?”⁸

He founded a Latin school in Glarus, and took the conduct of it into his own hands. He gathered into it the youth of all the best families in his extensive parish, and so gained them to the cause of letters and of noble aims. As soon as his pupils were ripe, he sent them either to Vienna, in the University of which Vadian, the friend of his youth, had risen to the rank of rector, or to Basle, where Glarean, another of his friends, had opened a seminary for young men. A gross licentiousness of manners, united with a fiery martial spirit, acquired in the Burgundian and Suabian wars, had distinguished the

⁸Zwing. Epp., p. 9.

inhabitants of Glarus before his arrival amongst them. An unwonted refinement of manners now began to characterise them, and many eyes were turned to that new light which had so suddenly broken forth in this obscure valley amid the Alps.

There came a pause in his classical studies and his pastoral work. The Pope of the day, Julius II., was warring with the King of France, Louis XII., and the Swiss were crossing the Alps to fight for “the Church.” The men of Glarus, with their cardinal-bishop, in casque and coat of mail, at their head, obeying a new summons from the warlike Pontiff, marched in mass to encounter the French on the plains of Italy. Their young priest, Ulric Zwingle, was compelled to accompany them. Few of these men ever returned: those who did, brought back with them the vices they had learned in Italy, to spread idleness, profligacy, and beggary over their native land. Switzerland was descending into an abyss. Ulric’s eyes began to be opened to the cause which was entailing such manifold miseries upon his country. He began to look more closely at the Papal system, and to think how he could avert the ruin which, mainly through the intrigues of Rome, appeared to impend over Swiss independence and Swiss morals. He resumed his studies. A solitary ray of light had found its way in the manner we have already shown into his mind. It had appeared sweeter than all the wisdom which he had acquired by the laborious study of the ancients, whether the classic writers, whom he enthusiastically admired, or the scholastic divines, whom he held but in small esteem. On his return from the scenes of dissipation and carnage which had met his gaze on the south of the Alps, he resumed the study of Greek, that he might have free access to the Divine source whence he knew that solitary ray had come.

This was a moment big with the fate of Zwingle, of his native Switzerland, and in no inconsiderable degree of the Church of God. The young priest of Glarus now placed himself in presence of the Word of God. If he shall submit his understanding and open his heart to its influence, all will be well; but if, offended by its doctrines, so humbling to the pride of the intellect, and so distasteful to the unrenewed heart, he shall turn away, his condition will be hopeless indeed. He has bowed before Aristotle: will he bow before a Greater speaking in this Word?

Chapter 6: Zwingle in Presence of the Bible

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Zwingle's profound Submission to Scripture—The Bible his First Authority—This a Wider Principle than Luther's—His Second Canon—The Spirit the Great Interpreter—His use of the Fathers—Light—The Swiss Reform presents a New Type of Protestantism—German Protestantism Dogmatic—Swiss Protestantism Normal—Duality in the False Religion of Christendom—Met by the Duality of Protestantism—Place of Reason and of Scripture

The point in which Zwingle is greatest, and in which he is second to none among the Reformers, is this, even his profound deference to the Word of God. There had appeared no one since our own Wicliffe who had so profoundly submitted himself to its teaching. When he came to the Bible, he came to it as a Revelation from God, in the full consciousness of all that such an admission implies, and prepared to follow it out to all its practical consequences. He accepted the Bible as a first authority, an infallible rule, in contradistinction to the Church or tradition, on the one hand, and to subjectivism or spiritualism on the other. This was the great and distinguishing principle of Zwingle, and of the Reformation which he founded—the sole and infallible authority of holy scripture. It is a prior and deeper principle than that of Luther. It is before it in logical sequence, and it is more comprehensive in its range; for even Luther's article of a standing or a falling Church, "justification by faith alone," must itself be tried by Zwingle's principle, and must stand or fall according as it agrees therewith. Is the free justification of sinners part of God's Revelation? That question we must first decide, before admitting the doctrine itself. The sole infallible authority of the Bible is therefore the first of all theological principles, being the basis on which all the others stand.

This was Zwingle's first canon: what was his second? Having adopted a Divine rule, he adopted also a Divine Interpreter. He

felt that it would be of but little use that God should speak if man were authoritatively to interpret. He believed in the Bible's self-evidencing power, that its true meaning was to be known by its own light. He used every help to ascertain its sense fully and correctly: he studied the languages in which it was originally given; he read the commentaries of learned and pious men; but he did not admit that any man, or body of men, had a peculiar and exclusive power of perceiving the sense of Scripture, and of authoritatively declaring it. The Spirit who inspired it would, he asserted, reveal it to every earnest and prayerful reader of it.

This was the starting-point of Ulric Zwingli. "The Scriptures," said he, "come from God, not from man, and even that God who enlightens will give thee to understand that the speech comes from God. The Word of God... cannot fail; it is bright, it teaches itself, it discloses itself, it illumines the soul with all salvation and grace, comforts it in God, humbles it, so that it loses and even forfeits itself, and embraces God in itself. ¹ These effects of the Bible, Zwingli had himself experienced in his own soul. He had been an enthusiastic student of the wisdom of the ancients: he had pored over the pages of the scholastic divines; but not till he came to the Holy Scriptures, did he find a knowledge that could solve his doubts and stay his heart. "When seven or eight years ago," we find him writing in 1522, "I began to give myself wholly up to the Holy Scriptures, philosophy and theology (scholastic) would always keep suggesting quarrels to me. At last I came to this, that I thought, 'Thou must let all that lie, and learn the meaning of God purely out of his own simple Word.' Then I began to ask God for his light, and the Scriptures began to be much easier to me, although I am but lazy." ²

Thus was Zwingli taught of the Bible. The ancient doctors and Fathers of the Church he did not despise, although he had not yet begun to study them. Of Luther he had not even heard the name. Calvin was then a boy about to enter school. From neither Wittenberg nor Geneva could it be said that the light shone upon the pastor of Glarus, for these cities themselves were still covered with the night. The day broke upon him direct from heaven. It shone

¹Zwingli Opp., ed. Schuler et Schulthess, 1, 81; apud Dorner, *Hist. Prot. Theol.*, vol. 1, p. 287.

²*Ibid.*, 1, 79; apud Dorner, vol 1, p. 287.

in no sudden burst; it opened in a gradual dawn; it continued from one studious year to another to grow. At last it attained its noon; and then no one of the great minds of the sixteenth century excelled the Reformer of Switzerland in the simplicity, harmony, and clearness of his knowledge. ³

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In Ulric Zwingle and the Swiss Reformation we are presented with a new type of Protestantism—a type different from that which we have already seen at Wittenberg. The Reformation was one in all the countries to which it extended; it was one in what it accepted, as well as in what it rejected; but it had, as its dominating and molding principle, one doctrine in Germany, another in Switzerland, and hence it came to pass that its outward type or aspect was two-fold. We may say it was dogmatic in the one country, normal in the other.

This duality was rendered inevitable by the state of the world. In the Christendom of that day there were two great currents of thought—there was the superstitious or self-righteous current, and there was the scholastic or rationalistic current. Thus the error which the Reformation sought to withstand wore a two-fold type, though at bottom one, for the superstitious element is as really human as the rationalistic. Both had been elaborated into a scheme by which man might save himself. On the side of self-righteousness man was presented with a system of meritorious services, penances, payments, and indulgences by which he might atone for sin, and earn Paradise. On the scholastic side he was presented with a system of rules and laws, by which he might discover all truth, become spiritually illuminated, and make himself worthy of the Divine favor. These were the two great streams into which the mighty flood of human corruption had parted itself.

³Zwingle's own words, as given in his Works, tom. 1, p. 37, are—"Caepi ego evangelium praedicare anno salutis decimo sexto supra millesimum et quingentesimum, eo scilicet tempore, cum Lutheri nomen in nostris regionibus ne auditum quidem adhuc erat" (I began to preach the Gospel in the year of grace 1516, at that time namely when even the name of Luther had not been heard in our country). Wolfgang's words are, as given in Capito's letter to Bullinger—"Nam antequam Lutherus in lucem emerserat, Zwinglius et ego inter nos communicavimus de Pontifice dejiciendo, etiam dum ille vitam degeret in Eremitorio" (For before Luther had appeared in public, Zwingle and I had conversed together regarding the overthrow of the Pope, even when he lived in the Hermitage).-Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 193.

Luther began his Reformation in the way of declaring war against the selfrighteous principle: Zwingle, on the other hand, began his by throwing down the gage battle to the scholastic divinity.

Luther's hygemonic or dominating principle was justification by faith alone, by which he overthrew the monkish fabric of human merit. Zwingle's dominating principle was the sole authority of the Word of God, by which he dethroned reason from the supremacy which the schoolmen had assigned her, and brought back the understanding and the conscience to Divine revelation. This appears to us the grand distinction between the German and the Swiss Reformation. It is a distinction not in substance or in nature, but in form, and grew out of the state of opinion in Christendom at the time, and the circumstance that the prevailing superstition took the monkish form mainly, though not exclusively, in the one half of Europe, and the scholastic form in the other. The type impressed on each-on the German and on the Swiss Reformation-at this initial stage, each has continued to wear more or less all along.

Nor did Zwingle think that he was dishonoring reason by assigning it its true place and office as respects revelation. If we accept a revelation at all, reason says we must accept it wholly. To say that we shall accept the Bible's help only where we do not need its guidance; that we shall listen to its teachings in those things that we already know, or might have known, had we been at pains to search them out; but that it must be silent on all those mysteries which our reason has not and could not have revealed to us, and which, now that they are revealed, reason cannot fully explain - to act thus is to make reason despicable under pretense of honoring it. For surely it is not reasonable to suppose that God would have made a special communication to us, if he had had nothing to disclose save what we already knew, or might have known by the exercise of the faculties he has given us. Reason bids us expect, in a Divine revelation, announcements not indeed contradictory to reason, but above reason; and if we reject the Bible because it contains such announcements, or reject those portions of it in which these announcements are put forth, we act irrationally. We put dishonor upon our reason. We make that a proof of the Bible's falsehood which is one of the strongest proofs of its truth. The Bible the first authority, was the fundamental principle of Zwingle's Reformation.

Chapter 7: Einsiedeln and Zurich

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Visit to Erasmus—The Swiss Fight for the Pope—Zwingle
Accompanies them—Marignano—Its Lessons—Zwingle invited to
Einsiedeln—Its Site—Its Administrator and Abbot—Its
Image—Pilgrims—Annual Festival—Zwingle’s Sermon—A
Stronghold of Darkness converted into a Beacon of Light—Zwingle
called to Zurich—The Town and Lake—Zwingle’s First
Appearance in its Pulpit—His Two Grand Principles—Effects of his
Preaching—His Pulpit a Fountain of National Regeneration

Picture: Francis I. of France

Picture: Zwingle Preaching in Zurich Cathedral

Two journeys which Zwingle made at this time had a marked effect upon him. The one was to Basle, where Erasmus was now living. His visit to the prince of scholars gave him equal pleasure and profit. He returned from Basle, his enthusiasm deepened in the study of the sacred tongues, and his thirst whetted for a yet greater acquaintance with the knowledge which these tongues contained.

The other journey was of another character, as well as in another direction. Louis XII. of France was now dead; Julius II. of Rome had also gone to his account; but the war which these two potentates had waged with each other remained as a legacy to their successors. Francis I. took up the quarrel—rushed into Italy—and the Pope, Leo X., summoned the Swiss to fight for the Church, now threatened by the French. Inflamed by the eloquence of their warlike cardinal, Matthew Schinner, Bishop of Sion, even more than drawn by the gold of Rome, the brave mountaineers hastened across the Alps to defend the “Holy Father.” The pastor of Glarus went with them to Italy, where one day he might be seen haranguing the phalanxes of his countrymen, and another day, sword in hand, fighting side by side with them on the battle-field—a blending of spiritual and military functions less repulsive to the ideas of that age than to those of the present. But in vain the Swiss poured out their blood. The great

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victory which the French achieved at Marignano inspired terror in the Vatican, filled the valleys of the Swiss with widows and orphans, and won for the youthful monarch of France a renown in arms which he was destined to lose, as suddenly as he had gained it, on the fatal field of Pavia.

But if Switzerland had cause long to remember the battle of Marignano, in which so many of her sons had fallen, the calamity was converted at a future day into a blessing to her. Ulric Zwingle had thoughts suggested to him during his visit to Italy which bore fruit on his return. The virtues that flourished at Rome, he perceived, were ambition and avarice, pride and luxury. These were not, he thought, by any means so precious as to need to be nourished by the blood of the Swiss. What a folly! what a crime to drag the flower of the youth of Switzerland across the Alps, and slaughter them in a cause like this! He resolved to do his utmost to stop this effusion of his countrymen's blood. He felt, more than ever, how necessary was a Reformation, and he began more diligently than before to instruct his parishioners in the doctrines of Holy Scripture.

He was thus occupied, searching the Bible, and communicating what, from time to time, he discovered in it to his parishioners, when he was invited (1516) to be preacher in the Convent of Einsiedeln. Theobald, Baron of Gherolds-Eck, was administrator of this abbey, and lord of the place. He was a lover of the sciences and of learned men, and above all of those who to a knowledge of science joined piety. From him came the call now addressed to the pastor of Glarus, drawn forth by the report which the baron had received of the zeal and ability of Zwingle. ¹ Its abbot was Conrad de Rechenberg, a gentleman of rank, who discountenanced the superstitious usages of his Church, and in his heart had no great affection for the mass, and in fact had dropped the celebration of it. One day, as some visitors were urging him to say mass, he replied, "If Jesus Christ is veritably in the Host, I am not worthy to offer Him in sacrifice to the Father; and if He be not in the Host, I should be more unhappy still, for I should make the people adore bread in place of God." ²

¹Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 74.

²Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 75.

Ought he to leave Glarus, and bury himself on a solitary mountain-top? This was the question Zwingle put to himself. He might, he thought, as well go to his grave at once; and yet, if he accepted the call, it was no tomb in which he would be shutting himself up. It was a famed resort of pilgrims, in which he might hope to prosecute with advantage the great work of enlightening his countrymen. He therefore decided to avail himself of the opportunity thus offered for carrying on his mission in a new and important field.

The Convent of Einsiedeln was situated on a little hill between the Lakes of Zurich and Wallenstadt. Its renown was inferior only to that of the far-famed shrine of Loretto. "It was the most famous," says Gerdesius, "in all Switzerland and Upper Germany."³ An inscription over the portal announced that "Plenary Indulgences" were to be obtained within; and moreover-and this was its chief attraction-it boasted an image of the Virgin which had the alleged power of working miracles. Occasional parties of pilgrims would visit Einsiedeln at all seasons, but when the great annual festival of its "Consecration" came round, thousands would flock from all parts of Switzerland, and from places still more remote, from France and Germany, to this famous shrine. On these occasions the valley at the foot of the mountain became populous as a city; and all day long files of pilgrims might be seen climbing the mountain, carrying in the one hand tapers to burn in honour of "Our Lady of Einsiedeln," and in the other money to buy the pardons which were sold at her shrine. Zwingle was deeply moved by the sight. He stood up before that great multitude-that congregation gathered from so many of the countries of Christendom-and boldly proclaimed that they had come this long journey in vain; that they were no nearer the God who hears prayer on this mountain-top than in the valley; that they were on no holier ground in the precincts of the Chapel of Einsiedeln than in their own closets; that they were spending "their money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not," and that it was not a pilgrim's gown but a contrite heart which was pleasing to God. Nor did Zwingle content himself with simply reproving the grovelling superstition and profitless rites which the multitudes whom this great festival had brought to Einsiedeln sub-

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³Hist. Ren. Evang., 1, 104.

stituted for love to God and a holy life. He preached to them the Gospel. He had pity on the many who came really seeking rest to their souls. He spoke to them of Christ and Him crucified. He told them that He was the one and only Savior; that His death had made a complete satisfaction for the sins of men; that the efficacy of His sacrifice lasts through all ages, and is available for all nations; and that there was no need to climb this mountain to obtain forgiveness; that the Gospel offers to all, through Christ, pardon without money and without price. This “good news” it was worth coming from the ends of the earth to hear.⁴ Yet there were those among this crowd of pilgrims who were not able to receive it as “good news.” They had made a long journey, and it was not pleasant to be told at the end of it that they might have spared their pains and remained at home. It seemed, moreover, too cheap a pardon to be worth having. They would rather travel the old road to Paradise by penances, and fasts, and alms-deeds, and the absolutions of the Church, than trust their salvation to a security so doubtful. To these men Zwingli’s doctrine seemed like a blasphemy of the Virgin in her own chapel.

But there were others to whom the preacher’s words were as “cold water” to one athirst. They had made trial of these self-righteous performances, and found their utter inefficacy. Had they not kept fast and vigil till they were worn to a skeleton? Had they not scourged themselves till the blood flowed? But peace they had not found: the sting of an accusing conscience was not yet plucked out. They were thus prepared to welcome the words of Zwingli. A Divine influence seemed to accompany these words in the case of many. They disclosed, it was felt, the only way by which they could ever hope to obtain eternal life, and returning to their homes they published abroad the strange but welcome tidings they had heard. Thus it came to pass that this, the chief stronghold of darkness in all Switzerland, was suddenly converted into a center of the Reformed light. “A trumpet had been blown,” and a “standard lifted up” upon the tops of the mountains.⁵

Zwingli continued his course. The well-worn pilgrim-track began to be disused, the shrine to which it led forsaken; and as

⁴Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 94.

⁵Christoffel, pp. 28, 29.

the devotees diminished, so too did the revenues of the priest of Einsiedeln. But so far from being grieved at the loss of his livelihood, it rejoiced Zwingle to think that his work was prospering. The Papal authorities offered him no obstruction, although they could hardly shut their eyes to what was going on. Rome needed the swords of the cantons. She knew the influence which Zwingle wielded over his countrymen, and she thought by securing him to secure them; but her favors and flatteries, bestowed through the Cardinal-Bishop of Sion, and the Papal legate, were totally unavailing to turn him from his path. He continued to prosecute his ministry, during the three years of his abode at this place, with a marked degree of success.

By this course of discipline Zwingle was being gradually prepared for beginning the Reformation of Switzerland. The post of Preacher in the College of Canons which Charlemagne had established at Zurich became vacant at this time, and on the 11th of December, 1518, Zwingle was elected, by a majority of votes, to the office.

The "foundation" on which Zwingle was now admitted was limited to eighteen members. According to the terms of Charlemagne's deed they were "to serve God with praise and prayer, to furnish the Christians in hill and valley with the means of public worship, and finally to preside over the Cathedral school," which, after the name of the founder, was called the Charles' School. The Great Minster, like most other ecclesiastical institutions, quickly degenerated, and ceased to fulfill the object for which it had been instituted. Its canons, spending their time in idleness and amusement, in falconry and hunting the boar, appointed a leut-priest with a small salary, supplemented by the prospect of ultimate advancement to a canonship, to perform the functions of public worship. This was the post that Zwingle was chosen to fill. At the time of his election the Great Minster had twenty-four canons and thirty-six chaplains. Felix Hammerlin, the precentor of this foundation, had said of it in the first half of the fifteenth century: "A blacksmith can, from a number of old horseshoes, pick out one and make it useable; but I know no smith who, out of all these canons, could make one good canon."⁶ We may be sure that there were some of a different spirit

⁶Christoffel, p. 111.

among the canons at the time of Zwingle's election, otherwise the chaplain of Einsiedeln would never have been chosen as Preacher in the Cathedral of Zurich.

[436] Zurich is pleasantly situated on the shores of the lake of that name. This is a noble expanse of water, enclosed within banks which swell gently upwards, clothed here with vineyards, there with pine-forests, from amid which hamlets and white villas gleam out and enliven the scene, while in the far-off horizon the glaciers are seen blending with the golden clouds. On the right the region is walled in by the craggy rampart of the Albis Alp, but the mountains stand back from the shore, and by permitting the light to fall freely upon the bosom of the lake, and on the ample sweep of its lovely and fertile banks, give a freshness and airiness to the prospect as seen from the city, which strikingly contrasts with the neighboring Lake of Zug, where the placid waters and the slumbering shore seem perpetually wrapped in the shadows of the great mountains.

Zurich was at that time the chief town of the Swiss Confederation. Every word spoken here had thus double power. If at Einsiedeln Zwingle had boldly rebuked superstition, and faithfully preached the Gospel, he was not likely to show either less intrepidity or less eloquence now that he stood at the center of Helvetia, and spoke to all its cantons. He appeared in the pulpit of the Cathedral of Zurich for the first time on the 1st of January, 1519. It was a singular coincidence, too, that this was his thirty-fifth birthday. He was of middle size, with piercing eyes, sharp-cut features, and clear ringing voice. The crowd was great, for his fame had preceded him. It was not so much his reputed eloquence which drew this multitude around him, including so many who had long ceased to attend service, as the dubious renown, as it was then considered, of preaching a new Gospel. He commenced his ministry by opening the New Testament, and reading the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew,⁷ and he continued his expositions of this Gospel on successive Sabbaths, till he had arrived at the end of the book. The life, miracles, teaching, and passion of Christ were ably and earnestly laid before his hearers.

⁷Ruchat. tom. 1, p. 105.

The two leading principles of his preaching at Zurich, as at Glarus and Einsiedeln, were—the Word of God the one infallible authority, and the death of Christ the one complete satisfaction. Making these his rallying-points, his address took a wide range, as suited his own genius, or as was demanded by the condition of his hearers, and the perils and duties of his country. Beneath him, crowding every bench, sat all ranks and conditions—states-men, burgomasters, canons, priests, scholars, merchants, and artisans. As the calm face of ocean reflects the sky which is hung above it, so did the rows of upturned faces respond to the varied emotions which proceeded from the cathedral pulpit of Zurich. Did the preacher, as was his delight, enlarge, in simple, clear, yet earnest words— words whose elegance charmed the learned, as they instructed the illiterate⁸ on a “free salvation,” the audience bent forward and drank in every syllable. Not all, however; for there were those among Zwingle’s hearers, and some even who had promoted his election, who saw that if this doctrine were generally received it would turn the world upside down. Popes must doff their tiara, and renowned doctors and monarchs of the schools must lay down their scepter.

The intrepid preacher would change his theme; and, while the fire of his eye and the sternness of his tones discovered the indignation of his spirit, he would reprove the pride and luxury which were corrupting the simplicity of ancient manners, and impairing the rigor of ancient virtue. When there was more piety at the hearth, there was more valor in the field. On glancing abroad, and pointing to the tyranny that flourished on the south of the Alps, he would denounce in yet more scathing tones that hypocritical ambition which, for its own aggrandisement, was rending their country in pieces, dragging away its sons to water foreign lands with their blood, and digging a grave for its morality and its independence. Their sires had broken the yoke of Austria, it remained for them to break the yet viler yoke of the Popes. Nor were these appeals without effect. Zwingle’s patriotism, kindled at the altar, and burning with holy and vehement flame, set on fire the souls of his countrymen. The knitted brows and flashing eyes of his audience showed that his words were telling, and that he had awakened something of the heroic spirit which the fathers

⁸Osw. Mycon., Vit. Zwing.

of the men he was addressing had displayed on the memorable fields of Mortgarten and Sempach.

It was seen flint a fountain of new life had been opened at the heart of Switzerland. Zwingle had become the regenerator of the nation. Week by week a new and fresh impulse was being propagated from the cathedral, throughout not Zurich only, but all the cantons; and the ancient simplicity and bravery of the Swiss, fast perishing under the wiles of Rome and the corrupting touch of French goht, were beginning again to flourish. “Glory be to God!” men were heard saying to one another, as they retired from the cathedral where they had listened to Zwingle, says Bullinger, in his Chronicle, “this man is a preacher of the truth. He will be our Moses to lead us forth from this Egyptian darkness.”

Chapter 8: The Pardon-Monger and the Plague

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The Two Proclamations—Pardon for Money and Pardon of Grace—Contemporaneous—The Cordelier Samson sent to Switzerland—Crosses St. Gothard—Arrives in Uri—Visits Schwitz-Zug—Bern—A General Release from Purgatory—Baden—“Ecce Volant!”—Zurich—Samson Denied Admission—Returns to Rome—The Great Death—Ravages—Zwingle Stricken—At the Point of Death—Hymn—Restored—Design of the Visitation

Picture: Henry Bullinger

Picture: Cathedral of Milan

It is instructive to mark that at the very moment when Rome was preparing for opening a great market in Christendom for the pardon of sin, so many preachers should be rising up, one in this country and another in that, and, without concert or pre-arrangement, beginning to publish the old Gospel that offers pardon without money. The same year, we may say, 1517, saw the commencement of both movements. In that year Rome gathered together her hawkers, stamped her indulgence tickets, fixed the price of sins, and enlarged her coffers for the streams of gold about to flow into them. Woe to the nations! the great sorceress was preparing new enchantments; and the fetters that bound her victims were about to be made stronger.

But unknown to Rome, at that very hour, numbers of earnest students, dispersed throughout Christendom, were poring over the page of Scripture, and sending up an earnest cry to God for light to enable them to understand its meaning. That prayer was heard. There fell from on high a bright light upon the page over which they bent in study. Their eyes were opened; they saw it all—the cross, the all-perfect and everlasting sacrifice for sin—and in their joy, unable to keep silence, they ran to tell the perishing tribes of the earth that there was “born unto them a Savior who is Christ the Lord.”

“Certain historians have remarked,” says Ruchat,¹ “that this year, 1517, there fell out a prodigy at Rome that seemed to menace the ‘Holy Chair’ with some great disaster. As the Pope was engaged in the election of thirty-one new cardinals, all suddenly there arose a horrible tempest. There came the loud peals of the thunder and the lightning’s terrific flash. One bolt struck the angel on the top of the Castle of St. Angelo, and threw it down; another, entering a church, shivered the statue of the infant Jesus in the arms of his mother; and a third tore the keys from the hands of the statue of St. Peter.” Without, however, laying stress upon this, a surer sign that this chair, before which the nations had so long bowed, was about to be stripped of its influence, and the keys wrested from the hands of its occupant, is seen in the rise of so many evangelists, filled with knowledge and intrepidity, to publish that Gospel of which it had been foretold that, like the lightning, it should shine from the east even unto the west.

We have already seen how contemporaneous in Germany were the two great preachings—forgiveness for money, and forgiveness through grace. They were nearly as contemporaneous in Switzerland.

The sale of indulgences in Germany was given to the Dominicans; in Switzerland this traffic was committed to the Franciscans. The Pope commissioned Cardinal Christopher, of Forli, general of the order, as superintendent-in-chief of the distribution in twenty-five provinces; and the cardinal assigned Switzerland to the Cordelier Bernardin Samson, guardian of the convent at Milan.² Samson had already served in the trade under two Popes, and with great advantage to those who had employed him. He had transported across the mountains, it was said, from Germany and Switzerland, chests filled with gold and silver vessels, besides what he had gathered in coin, amounting in eighteen years to no less a sum than eight hundred thousand dollars.³ Such were the antecedents of the man who now crossed the Swiss frontier on the errand of vending the Pope’s pardons, and returning with the price to those who had sent him, as he thought, but in reality to kindle a fire amid the Alps, which would

¹Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 90.

²Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 92.

³Ibid

extend to Rome, and do greater injury to the “Holy Chair” than the lightning which had grazed it, and passed on to consume the keys in the hands of the statue of St. Peter.

“He discharged his mission in Helvetia with not less impudence,” says Gerdesius, “than Tetzels in Germany.”⁴ Forcing his way (1518) through the snows of the St. Gothard, and descending along the stream of the Reuss, he and his band arrived in the canton of Uri.

⁵ A few days sufficing to fleece these simple mountaineers, the greedy troop passed on to Schwitz, there to open the sale of their merchandise. Zwingle, who was then at Einsiedeln, heard of the monk’s arrival and mission, and set out to confront him. The result was that Samson was obliged to decamp, and from Schwitz went on to Zug. On the shores of this lake, over whose still waters the lofty Rossberg and the Righi Culm hang a continual veil of shadows, and Rome a yet deeper veil of superstition and credulity, Samson set up his stage, and displayed his wares. The little towns on the lake sent forth their population in such crowds as almost to obstruct the sale, and Samson had to entreat that a way might be opened for those who had money, promising to consider afterwards the case of those who had none. Having finished at Zug, he traveled over the Oberland, gathering the hard cash of the peasants and giving them the Pope’s pardons in return. The man and his associates got fat on the business; for whereas when they crossed the St. Gothard, lank, haggard, and in rags, they looked like bandits, they were now in flesh, and daintily apparelled. Directing his course to Bern, Samson had some difficulty in finding admission for himself and his wares into that lordly city. A little negotiation with friends inside, however, opened its gates. He proceeded to the cathedral church, which was hung with banners on which the arms of the Pope were blazoned in union with those of the cantons, and there he said mass with great pomp. A crowd of spectators and purchasers filled the cathedral. His bulls of indulgences were in two forms, the one on parchment and the other on paper. The first were meant for the rich, and were charged a dollar. The others were for the poor, and were sold at two batzen apiece. He had yet a third set, for which he charged

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⁴Hist. Ren. Evang. tom. 1, pp. 106, 122.

⁵Pallavicino, tom. 1, lib. 1, cap. 19, p. 80.

a much higher sum. A gentleman of Orbe, named Arnay, gave 500 dollars for one of these.⁶ A Bernese captain, Jacob von Stein, bartered the dapple-grey mare which he bestrode for one of Samson's indulgences. It was warranted good for himself, his troop of 500 men, and all the vassals on the Seigniorship of Belp⁷ and may therefore be reckoned cheap, although the animal was a splendid one. We must not pass without notice a very meritorious act of the monk in this neighborhood. The small town of Aarberg, three leagues from Bern, had, some years before, been much damaged by fire and floods. The good people of the place were taught to believe that these calamities had befallen them for the sin they had committed in insulting a nuncio of the Pope. The nuncio, to punish the affront he had received at their hands, and which reflected on the Church whose servant he was, had excommunicated them, and cursed them, and threatened to bury their village seven fathoms deep in the earth. They had recourse to Samson to lift off a malediction which had already brought so many woes upon them, and the last and most dreadful of which yet awaited them. The lords of Bern used their mediation for the poor people. The good monk was compassionate. He granted, but of course not without a sum of money, a plenary indulgence, which removed the excommunication of the nuncio, and permitted the inhabitants to sleep in peace. Whether it is owing to Samson's indulgence we shall not say, but the fact is undeniable that the little town of Aarberg is above ground to this day.⁸ At Bern, so pleased was the monk with his success, that he signalled his departure with a marvellous feat of generosity. The bells were tolling his leave-taking, when Samson caused it to be proclaimed that he "delivered from the torments of purgatory and of hell all the souls of the Benrose who are dead, whatever may have been the manner or the place of their death."⁹ What sums it would have saved the good people of Bern, had he made that announcement on the first

⁶Some of Samson's indulgences were preserved in the archives of the towns, and in the libraries of private families, down to Ruchat's time, the middle of last century. The indulgence bought by Arnay for 500 dollars Ruchat had seen, signed by Samson himself. Two batzen, for which the paper indulgences were sold, are about three-halfpence.

⁷Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 96

⁸Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 97.

⁹Ibid., pp. 97, 98. Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 124.

day of his visit! At Bern, Lupullus, formerly the schoolmaster, now canon, and whom we have already met with as one of Zwingli's teachers, was Samson's interpreter. "When the wolf and the fox prowl about together," said one of the canons to De Wattville, the provost, "your safest plan, my gracious lord, is to shut up your sheep and your geese." These remarks, as they broke no bones, and did not spoil his market, Samson bore with exemplary good nature.

From Bern, Samson went on to Baden. The Bishop of Constance, in whose diocese Baden was situated, had forbidden his clergy to admit the indulgence-monger into their pulpits, not because he disapproved his trade, but because Samson had not asked his permission before entering his diocese, or had his commission countersigned by him. The Cure of Baden, however, had not courage to shut the door of his pulpit in the face of the Pope's commissioner.

After a brisk trade of some days, the monk proposed to signalise his departure by an act of grace, similar to that with which he had closed his performances in Bern. After mass, he formed a procession, and putting himself at its head, he marched round the churchyard, himself and troop chanting the office for the dead. Suddenly he stopped, looked fixedly up into the sky, and after a minute's pause, he shouted out, "Ecce volant!"-"See how they fly!" These were the souls escaping through the open gates of purgatory and winging their way to Paradise. It struck a wag who was present that he would give a practical commentary on the flight of the souls to heaven. He climbed to the top of the steeple, taking with him a bag of feathers, which he proceeded to empty into the air. As the feathers were descending like snow-flakes on Samson and his company, the man exclaimed, "Ecce Volant!"-"See how they fly!" The monk burst into a rage. To have the grace of holy Church so impiously travestied was past endurance. Such horrible profanation of the wholesome institution of indulgences, he declared, destowed nothing less than burning. But the citizens pacified him by saying that the man's wits were at times disordered. Be this as it may, it had turned the laugh against Samson, who departed from Baden somewhat crestfallen.¹⁰

Samson continued his journey, and gradually approached Zurich. At every step he dispensed his pardons, and yet his stock was no

¹⁰Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 106.

nearer being exhausted than when he crossed the Alps. On the way he was told that Zwingli was thundering against him from the pulpit of the cathedral. He went forward, notwithstanding. He would soon put the preacher to silence. As he came nearer, Zwingli waxed the bolder and the plainer. "God only can forgive," said the preacher, with a solemnity that awed his hearers; "none on earth can pardon sin. You may buy this man's papers, but be assured you are not absolved. He who sells indulgences is a sorcerer, like Simon Magus; a false prophet, like Balaam; an ambassador of the king of the bottomless pit, for to those dismal portals rather than to the gates of Paradise do indulgences lead."

Samson reached Zurich to find its gates closed, and the customary cup of wine—a hint that he was not expected to enter—waiting him. ¹¹ Feigning to be charged with a special message from the Pope to the Diet, he was admitted into the city. At his audience it was found that he had forgotten his message, for the sufficient reason that he had never received any. He was ignominiously sent away without having sold so much as a single pardon in Zurich. Soon thereafter he re-crossed the Alps, dragging over their steeps a wagonful of coin, the fruits of his robbery, and returned to his masters in Italy. ¹²

[441] He was not long gone when another visitant appeared in Switzerland, sent of God to purify and invigorate the movement—to scatter the good seed on the soil which Zwingli had ploughed and broken up. That visitant was the plague or "Great Death." It broke out in the August of that same year, 1519. As it spread from valley to valley, inflicting frightful ravages, men felt what a mockery were the pardons which thousands, a few months before, had flocked to purchase. It reached Zurich, and Zwingli, who had gone to the baths of Pfaffers to recruit his health, exhausted by the labours of the summer, hastened back to his flock. He was hourly by the bedside of the sick or the dying. ¹³ On every side of him fell friends, acquaintances, stricken down by the destroyer. He himself had hitherto escaped his shafts, but now he too was attacked. He lay at the point of death. Utterly prostrate, all hope of life was taken away. It was at this

¹¹Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 126.

¹²Pallavicino, tom. 1, p. 80.

¹³Bullinger, p. 87.

moment that he penned his little hymn, so simple, yet not a little dramatic, and breathing a resignation so entire, and a faith so firm-

“Lo! at the door I hear Death’s knock! Shield me,
O Lord, My strength and rock.
“The hand once nailed Upon the tree, Jesus, uplift - And
shelter me,
“Willest Thou, then, Death conquer me In my noon-
day?... So let it be!

“Oh! may I die, Since I am Thine; Thy home is made For faith
like mine.”

Thus he examined, at that awful moment, the foundations of his faith; he lifted his eyes to the cross; he knew whom he had believed; and being now more firmly persuaded than ever of the Gospel’s truth, having put it to the last awful test, he returned from the gates of the grave to preach it with even more spirituality and fervor than before. Tidings of his death had been circulated in Basle, in Lucerne - in short, all the cities of the Confederation. Everywhere men heard with dismay that the great preacher of Switzerland had gone to his grave. Their joy was great in proportion when they learned that Zwingli still lived. ¹⁴ Both the Reformer and the country had been chastened, purified, and prepared, the one for his mighty task, and the other for the glorious transformation that awaited it.

¹⁴Zwing. Epp., p. 91.

Chapter 9: Extension of the Reformation to Bern and Other Swiss Towns

A Solemn Meeting—Zwingle Preaches with greater Life—Human Merit and Gospel Virtue—The Gospel Annihilates the one, Nourishes the other—Power of Love—Zwingle’s Hearers Increase—His Labours—Conversions—Extension of the Movement to other Swiss Towns—Basle—Lucerne—Oswald Myconius—Labours in Lucerne—Opposition—Is Thrust out—Bern—Establishment of the Reformation there

Picture: Samson Selling Indulgences

Picture: Swiss Reformer Preaching to his Flock in the Open Field

When Zwingle and the citizens of Zurich again assembled in their cathedral, it was a peculiarly solemn moment for both. They were just emerging from the shadow of the “Great Death.” The preacher had risen from a sick-bed which had nearly passed into a death-bed, and the audience had come from waiting beside the couches on which they had seen their relations and friends breathe their last. The Reformed doctrine seemed to have acquired a new value. In the awful gloom through which they had just passed, when other lights had gone utterly out, the Gospel had shone only the brighter. Zwingle spoke as he had never spoken before, and his audience listened as they had listened on no former occasion.

Zwingle now opened a deeper vein in his ministry. He touched less frequently upon the evils of foreign service. Not that he was less the patriot, but being now more the pastor, he perceived that a renovated Christianity was not only the most powerful renovator of his country’s morals, but the surest palladium of its political interests. The fall and the recovery of man were his chief themes.

[442] “In Adam we are all dead,” would he say—“sunk in corruption and condemnation.” This was a somewhat inauspicious commencement of a Gospel of “good news,” for which, after the terrors incident to the scenes which the Zurichers had witnessed, so many of them

thirsted. But Zwingle went on to proclaim a release from prison—an opening of the sepulcher. But dead men do not open their own tombs. Christ was their life. He had become so by His passion, which was “an eternal sacrifice, and everlastingly effectual to heal.”¹ To Him must they come. “His sacrifice satisfies Divine justice for ever in behalf of all who rely upon it with firm and unshaken faith.” Are men then to live in sin? Are they to cease to cultivate holiness? No. Zwingle went on to show that, although this doctrine annihilates human merit, it does not annihilate evangelical virtue: that, although no man is saved for his holiness, no man will be saved without holiness: that as God bestows his salvation freely, so we give our obedience freely: on the one side there is life by grace, and on the other works by love.

And then, going still deeper down, Zwingle would disclose that principle which is at once the strongest and the sweetest in all the Gospel system. What is that principle? Is it law? No. Law comes like a tyrant with a rod to coerce the unwilling, and to smite the guilty. Man is both unwilling and guilty. Law in his case, therefore, can but engender fear: and that fear darkens his mind, enfeebles his will, and produces a cramped, cringing, slavish spirit, which vitiates all he does. It is the Medusa-head that turns him into stone.

What then is the principle? It is love. But how comes love to spring up in the heart of a guilty and condemned man? It comes in this wise. The Gospel turns man’s eye upon the Savior. He sees Him enduring His passion in his stead, bearing the bitter tree, to bestow upon him a free forgiveness, and life everlasting. That look enkindles love. That love penetrates his whole being, quickening, purifying, and elevating all his powers, filling the understanding with light, the will with obedience, the conscience with peace, the heart with joy, and making the life to abound in holy deeds, fruitful alike to God and man. Such was the Gospel that was now preached in the Cathedral of Zurich.

The Zurichers did not need any argument to convince them that this doctrine was true. They read its truth in its own light. Its glory was not of earth, but of the skies, where was the place of its birth. An unspeakable joy filled their hearts when they saw the black night

¹Zwing. Opp., 1, 206; apud D’Aubigne, 2, 351.

of monkery departing, with its cowls, its beads, its scourges, its purgatorial fires, which had given much uneasiness to the flesh, but brought no relief to the conscience; and the sweet light of the Gospel opening so full of refreshing to their souls.

The cathedral, although a spacious building, could not contain the crowds that flocked to it. Zwingli labored with all his might to consolidate the movement. He admirably combined prudence with his zeal. He practiced the outward forms of the Church in the pale of which he still remained. He said mass: he abstained from flesh on fast-days: but all the while he laboured indefatigably to diffuse a knowledge of Divine truth, knowing that as the new growth developed, the old, with its rotten timber, and seared and shrivelled leaves, would be cast off. As soon as men should come to see that a free pardon was offered to them in the Bible, they would no longer scourge themselves to merit one, or climb the mountain of Einsiedeln with money in their hand to buy one. In short, Zwingli's first object, which he ever kept clearly in view, was not the overthrow of the Papacy, but the restoration of Christianity.

He commenced a week-day lecture for the peasants who came to market on Friday. Beautifully consecutive and logical was his Sunday course of instruction. Having opened to his flock the Gospel in his expositions of St. Matthew, he passed on to the consideration of the Acts of the Apostles, that he might show them how Christianity was diffused. He next expounded the Epistles, that he might have an opportunity of inculcating the Christian graces, and showing that the Gospel is not only a "doctrine," but also a "life." He then took up the Epistles of St. Peter, that he might reconcile the two apostles, and show the harmony that reigns in the New Testament on the two great subjects of "Faith" and "Works;" and last of all he expounded the Epistle to the Hebrews, showing the harmony that subsists between the two Dispensations, that both have one substance, and that one substance is the Gospel-Salvation of Grace-and that the difference lay only in the mode of revelation, which was by type and symbol in the one case, by plain literal statements in the other. "Here they were to learn," says Zwingli, "that Christ is our alone true High Priest. That was the seed I sowed; Matthew, Luke, Paul, Peter have watered it, but God caused it to thrive." And in a letter to Myconius,

of December 31st, 1519,² he reports that “at Zurich upwards of 2,000 souls had already been so strengthened and nourished by the milk of the truth, that they could now bear stronger food, and anxiously longed for it.” Thus, step by step, did Zwingli lead his hearers onward from the first principles to the higher mysteries of Divine revelation.

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A movement like this could not be confined within the walls of Zurich, any more than day can break and valley and mountain-top not catch the radiance. The seeds of this renovation were being cast by Zwingli into the air; the winds were wafting them all over Switzerland, and at many points laborers were preparing a soil in which they might take root and grow. It was in favor of the movement here that the chief actors were not, as elsewhere, kings, ministers, and princes of the Church, but the people. Let us look around and note the beginnings of this movement, by which so many of the Helvetic cantons were, at no distant day, to be emancipated from the tyranny of the Papal supremacy, and the superstitions of the Papal faith.

We begin on the northern frontier. There was at that time at Basle a brilliant cluster of men. Among the first, and by much the most illustrious of them all, was Erasmus, whose edition of the New Testament (1516) may be said to have opened a way for the Reformation. The labours of the celebrated printer Frobenius were scarcely less powerful. He printed at Basle the writings of Luther, and in a short time spread them in Italy, France, Spain, and England.³ Among the second class, the more distinguished were Capito and Hedio. They were warm friends and admirers of Zwingli, and they adopted in Basle the same measures for the propagation of the Reformed faith which the latter was prosecuting with so much success at Zurich. Capito began to expound daily to the citizens the Gospel according to St. Matthew, and with results thus described in a letter of Hedio’s to Zwingli in 1520: “This most efficacious doctrine of Christ penetrates and warms the heart.”⁴ The audiences increased. The doctors and monks conspired against the

²Christoffel, pp. 40, 42.

³Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 108.

⁴Gerdesius, tom. 2, p. 229.

preacher,⁵ and raised tumults. The Cardinal-Archbishop of Mainz, desiring to possess so great a scholar, invited Capito to Mainz,⁶ On his departure, however, the work did not cease. Hedio took it up, and beginning where Capito had stopped, went on to expound the Gospel with a courageous eloquence, to which the citizens listened, although the monks ceased not to warn them against believing those who told them that the sum of all Christian doctrine was to be found in the Gospel. Scotus, said they, was a greater doctor than St. Paul. So broke the dawn of the Reformation in Basle. The number of its disciples in this seat of learning rapidly increased. Still it had a long and sore fight before obtaining the mastery. The aristocracy were powerful: the clergy were not less so: the University threw its weight into the same scale. Here was a triple rampart, which it cost the truth much effort to scale. Hedio, who succeeded Capito, was himself succeeded by Ecolampadius, the greatest of the three. Ecolampadius labored with zeal and waited in hope for six years. At last, in 1528, Basle, the last of all the Helvetic cantons, decreed its acceptance of the Reformed faith.⁷

At Lucerne, Myconius endeavored to sow the good seed of the Gospel; but the soil was unkindly, and the seed that sprang up soon withered. It was choked by the love of arms and the power of superstition. Oswald Geishauer - for such was his name till Erasmus hellenised it into Myconius - was one of the sweetest spirits and most accomplished minds of that age. He was born at Lucerne (1488), and educated at Basle, where he became Rector of St. Peter's School. In 1516 he left Basle, and became Rector of the Cathedral School at Zurich. He was the first of those who sought to dispel the ignorance of his native Switzerland by laboring, in his vocation as schoolmaster, to introduce at once the knowledge of ancient letters and the love of Holy Scripture. He had previously contracted a friendship with Zwingli, and it was mainly through his efforts and counsel that the Preacher of Einsiedeln was elected to fill the vacant office at Zurich. The two friends worked lovingly together, but at length it was resolved that Myconius should carry the light to his

⁵Scultet. p. 67.

⁶Gerdesius, tom. 2, p. 229.

⁷Gerdesius, tom. 2, sec. 106, 120, 121.

native city of Lucerne. The parting was sad, but Myconius obeyed the call of duty and set out.

He hoped that his office as head-master in the collegiate school of this city would afford him opportunities of introducing a higher knowledge than that of Pagan literature among the citizens around the Waldstatter Lake. He began his work very quietly. The writings of Luther had preceded him, but the citizens of Lucerne, the strenuous advocates at once of a foreign service and a foreign faith, abominated these books as if they had proceeded from the pen of a demon. The expositions of Myconius in the school awakened instant suspicion. "We must burn Luther and the schoolmaster,"⁸ said the citizens to one another. Myconius went on, notwithstanding, not once mentioning Luther's name, but quietly conveying to the youth around him a knowledge of the Gospel. The whisperings soon grew into accusations.

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At last they burst out in fierce threats. "I live among ravenous wolves," we find him writing in December, 1520.⁹ He was summoned before the council. "He is a Lutheran," said one accuser; "he is a seducer of youth," said another. The council enjoined him not to read anything of Luther's to his scholars-not even to mention his name-nay, not even to admit the thought of him into his mind.¹⁰ The lords of Lucerne set no narrow limits to their jurisdiction. The gentle spirit of the schoolmaster was ill-fitted to buffet the tempests that assailed him on every side. He had offered the Gospel to the citizens of Lucerne, and although a few had accepted it, and loved him for its sake, the great majority had thrust it from them. There were other cities and cantons that, he knew, would gladly welcome the truth which Lucerne had rejected. He resolved, therefore, to shake off the dust from his feet as a witness against it, and depart. Before he had carried his resolution into effect, the council furnished him with but too good evidence that the course he had resolved upon was the path of duty. He was suddenly stripped of his office, and banished from the canton. He quitted the ungrateful city, where his cradle had been

⁸Letter to Zwingli, 1520-Gerdesius, tom. 2, p. 231.

⁹Gerdesius, tom. 2, p. 232.

¹⁰"Ne Lutherum discipulis legerem; ne nominarem, imo ne in mentem eum admitterem." (Gerdesius, tom. 2, p. 232.)

placed, and in 1522 he returned to Zwingle at Zurich. ¹¹ Lucerne failed to verify the augury of its name, and the light that departed with its noblest son has never since returned.

Bern knew to choose the better part which Lucerne had rejected. Its citizens had won renown in arms; their city had never opened its gates to an enemy, but in the morning of the sixteenth century it was conquered by the Gospel, and the victory which truth won at Bern was the more important that it opened a door for the diffusion of the Gospel throughout Western Switzerland.

It was the powerful influence that proceeded from Zurich which originated the Reformed movement in the warlike city of Bern. Sebastian Meyer had “by little and little opened the gates of the Gospel” to the Bernese. ¹² But eminently the Reformer of this city was Berthold Haller. He was born in Roteville, ¹³ Wurtemberg, and studied at Pforzheim, where he was a fellowstudent of Melanchthon. In 1520 he came to Bern, and was made Canon and Preacher in the cathedral. He possessed in ample measure all the requisites for influencing public assemblies. He had a noble figure, a graceful manner, a mind richly endowed with the gifts of nature, and yet more richly furnished with the acquisitions of learning. After the example of Zwingle, he expounded from the pulpit the Gospel as contained in the evangelists. But the Bernese partook not a little of the rough and stubborn nature of the animal that figures in their cantonal shield. The clash of halberds and swords had more attraction for their ears than the sound of the Gospel. Haller’s heart at times grew faint. He would pour into the bosom of Zwingle all his fears and griefs. He should perish one day by the teeth of these bears: so he wrote. “No,”
[445] would Zwingle reply, in ringing words that made him ashamed of his
[446] timidity, “you must tame these bear-cubs by the Gospel. You must neither be ashamed nor afraid of them. For whosoever is ashamed of Christ before men, of him will Christ be ashamed before His Father.” Thus would Zwingle lift up the hands that hung down, and set them working with fresh rigor. The sweetness of the Gospel doctrine was stronger than the sternness of Bernese nature. The bear-cubs were tamed. Reanimated by the letters of Zwingle, and the arrival

¹¹Gerdesius, tom. 2, p. 233. D’Aubigne, vol. 2, p. 400.

¹²Gerdesius, tom. 2, p. 237.

¹³Ibid., tom. 2, p. 236-Effigies.

from Nuremberg of a Carthusian monk named Kolb,¹⁴ with hoary head but a youthful heart, fired with the love of the Gospel, and demanding, as his only stipend, the liberty of preaching it, Haller had his zeal and perseverance rewarded by seeing in 1528 the city and powerful canton of Bern, the first after Zurich of all the cantons of Helvetia, pass over to the side of Protestantism.¹⁵

The establishment of the Protestant worship at Bern formed an epoch in the Swiss Reformation. That event had been preceded by a conference which was numerously attended, and at which the distinctive doctrines of the two faiths were publicly discussed by the leading men of both sides.¹⁶ The deputies had their views cleared and their zeal stimulated by these discussions, and on their return to their several cantons, they set themselves with fresh vigor to complete, after the example of Bern, the work of reformation. For ten years previously it had been in progress in most of them.

¹⁴Gerdsius, tom. 2, p. 322

¹⁵Gerdsius, tom. 2, p. 238. Christoffel, pp. 186-192. D'Aubigne, vol. 2, p. 359; vol. 3, pp. 259-261.

¹⁶See summary of Disputation in Gerdsius, tom 2, sec. 118.

Chapter 10: Spread of Protestantism in Eastern Switzerland

St. Gall—The Burgomaster—Purgation of the Churches—Canton Glarus—Valley of the Tockenburg—Embraces Protestantism—Schwytz about to enter the Movement—Turns back—Appenzell—Six of its Eight Parishes embrace the Gospel—The Grisons—Coire—Becomes Reformed—Constance—Schaffhausen—The German Bible—Its Influence—The Five Forest Cantons—They Crouch down under the Old Yoke

The light radiating from Zurich is touching the mountain-tops of Eastern Switzerland, and Protestantism is about to make great progress in this part of the land. At this time Joachim Vadian, of a noble family in the canton of St. Gall, returning from his studies in Vienna, put his hand to the plough of the Reformation.¹ Although he filled the office of burgomaster, he did not disdain to lecture to his townsmen on the Acts of the Apostles, that he might exhibit to them the model of the primitive Church—in simplicity and uncorruptedness, how different from the pattern of their own day!² A contemporary remarked, “Here in St. Gall it is not only allowed to hear the Word of God, but the magistrates themselves preach it.”³ Vadian kept up an uninterrupted correspondence with Zwingle, whose eye continually watched the progress of the work in all parts of the field, and whose pen was ever ready to minister encouragement and direction to those engaged in it. A sudden and violent outburst of Anabaptism endangered the cause in St. Gall, but the fanaticism soon spent itself; and the preachers returning from a conference at Baden with fresh courage, the reformation of the canton was completed. The images were removed from the Church of St. Lawrence, and the

¹Gerdesius, tom. 2, p. 239.

²Ibid., p. 246.

³Christoffel, p. 180.

robes, jewels, and gold chains which adorned them sold to found alms-houses. ⁴ In 1528 we find Vadian writing, "Our temples at St. Gall are purged from idols, and the glorious foundations of the building of Christ are being more laid every day." ⁵

In the canton of Glarus the Reformed movement had been begun by Zwingli himself. On his removal to Einsiedeln, three evangelists who had been trained under him came forward to carry on the work. Their names were - Tschudi, who labored in the town of Glarus; Brunner, in Mollis; and Schindler, in Schwanden. Zwingli had sown the seed: these three gathered in the harvest. ⁶

The rays of truth penetrated into Zwingli's native valley of the Tockenurg. With intense interest did he watch the issue of the struggle between the light and the darkness on a spot to which he was bound by the associations of his youth, and by many ties of blood and friendship. Knowing that the villagers were about to meet to decide whether they should embrace the new doctrine, or continue to worship as their fathers had done, Zwingli addressed a letter to them in which he said, "I praise and thank God, Who has called me to the preaching of His Gospel, that He has led you, who are so dear to my heart, out of the Egyptian darkness of false human doctrines, to the wondrous light of His Word;" and he goes on earnestly to exhort them to add to their profession of the Gospel doctrine the practice of every Gospel virtue, if they would have profit, and the Gospel praise. This letter decided the victory of Protestantism in the Reformer's native valley. The council and the community in the same summer, 1524, made known their will to the clergy, "that the Word of God be preached with one accord." The Abbot of St. Gall and the Bishop of Coire sought to prevent effect being given to these instructions. They summoned three of the preachers-Melitus, Doering, and Farer-before the chapter, and charged them with disobedience. The accused answered in the spirit of St. Peter and St. John before the council, "Convince us by the Word of God, and we will submit ourselves not only to the chapter, but to the least of our brethren; but contrariwise we will submit to no one-no, not even to the mightiest potentate." The two dignitaries

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⁴D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 320

⁵Gerdesius, tom 2, p. 367, foot-note

⁶Christoffel, pp. 173, 174.

declined to take up the gage which the three pastors had thrown down. They retired, leaving the valley of the Tockenurg in peaceful possession of the Gospel.⁷

In the ancient canton of Schwitz, which lay nearer to Zurich than the places of which we have just spoken, there were eyes that were turned in the direction of the light. Some of its citizens addressed Zwingle by letter, desiring him to send men to them who might teach them the new way. "They had begun to loathe," they said, "the discolored stream of the Tiber, and to thirst for those waters whereof they who had once tasted wished evermore to drink." Schwitz, however, did not intend to take her stand by the side of her sister Zurich, in the bright array of cantons that had now begun to march under the Reformed banner.

The majority of her citizens, content to drink at the muddy stream from which some had turned away, were not yet prepared to join in the request, "Give us of this water, that we may go no more to Rome to draw." Their opportunity was let slip. They spurned the advice of Zwingle not to sell their blood for gold, by sending their sons to fight for the Pope, as he was now soliciting them to do. Schwitz became one of the most hostile of all the Helvetic cantons to the Reformer and his work.

But though the cloud still continued to rest on Schwitz, the light shone on the cantons around and beyond it.

Appenzell opened its mountain fastnesses for the entrance of the heralds of the Reformed faith. Walter Klarer, a native of the canton, who had studied at Paris, and been converted by the writings of Luther, began in 1522 to preach here with great zeal. He found an efficient coadjutor in James Schurtanner, minister at Teufen. We find Zwingle writing to the latter in 1524 as follows: "Be manly and firm, dear James, and let not yourself be overcome, that you may be called Israel. We must contend with the foe till the day dawn, and the powers of darkness hide themselves in their own black night... It is to be hoped that, although your canton is the last in the order of the Confederacy,⁸ it will not be the last in the faith. For these people dwell not in the center of a fertile country, where the dangers

⁷Gerdesius, tom 2, pp. 368,394. Christoffel, pp. 175,178.

⁸Appenzell joined the Swiss league in 1513, and was the last in order of the so-called old cantons.

of selfishness and pleasure are greatest, but in a mountain district where a pious simplicity can be better preserved, which guileless simplicity, joined to an intelligent piety, affords the best and surest abiding-place for faith." The audiences became too large for the churches to contain.

"The Gospel needs neither pillared aisle nor fretted roof," said they; "let us go to the meadow." They assembled in the open fields, and their worship lost nothing of impressiveness, or sublimity, by the change. The echoes of their mountains awoke responsive to the voice of the preacher proclaiming the "good tidings," and the psalm with which their service was closed blended with the sound of the torrents as they rolled down from the summits.⁹ Out of the eight parishes of the canton, six embraced the Reformation.

Following the course of the Upper Rhine, the Protestant movement penetrated to Coire, which nestles at the foot of the Splügen pass. The soil had been prepared here by the schoolmaster Salandrinus, a friend of Zwingli. In 1523 the Diet met at Coire to take into consideration the abuses in the Church, and to devise means for their removal. Eighteen articles were drawn up and confirmed in the year following, of which we give only the first as being the most important: "Each clergyman shall, for himself, purely and fully preach the Word of God and the doctrine of Christ to his people, and shall not mislead them by the doctrines of human invention. Whoever will not or cannot fulfill this official duty shall be deprived of his living, and draw no part of the same." In virtue of this decision, the Dean of St. Martin's, after a humiliating confession of his inability to preach, was obliged to give way to Zwingli's friend, John Dorfman, or Comander—a man of great courage, and renowned for his scholarship—who now became the chief instrument in the reform of the city and canton. Many of the priests were won to the Gospel: those who remained on the side of Rome, with the bishop at their head, attempted to organise an opposition to the movement. Their violence was so great that the Protestant preacher, Comander, had to be accompanied to the church by an armed guard, and defended, even in the sanctuary, from insult and outrage. In the country districts, where more than forty Protestant evangelists, "like

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⁹Christoffel, pp. 179-181.

fountains of living water, were refreshing hill and dale,” the same precautions had to be taken. Finding that the work was progressing nevertheless, the bishop complained of the preachers to the Diet, as “heretics, insurrectionists, sacrilegists, abusers of the holy Sacraments, and despisers of the mass-sacrifice,” and besought the aid of the civil power to put them down. When Zwingli heard of the storm that was gathering, he wrote to the magistrates of Coire with apostolic vigor, pointing to the sort of opposition that was being offered to the Gospel and its preachers in their territories, and he charged them, as they valued the light now beginning to illuminate their land, and dreaded being plunged again into the old darkness, in which the Truth had been held captive, and its semblance palmed upon them, to the cozening them of their worldly goods, and, as he feared he had ground to add, of their souls’ salvation, that they should protect the heralds of the Gospel from insult and violence. Zwingli’s earnest appeal produced a powerful effect in all the councils and communities of the Grisons; and when the bishop, through the Abbot of St. Luzi, presented his accusation against the Protestant preachers, in the Diet which met at Coire on Christmas Day, 1525, craving that they should be condemned without a hearing, that assembly answered with dignity, “The law which demands that no one be condemned unheard, shall also be observed in this instance.” There followed a public disputation at Ilanz, and the conversion of seven more mass-priests.¹⁰ The issue was that the canton was won. “Christ waxed strong everywhere in these mountains,” writes Salandrinus to Zwingli, “like the tender grass in spring.”¹¹

Nor did the reform find here its limits. Napoleon had not yet cut a path across these glacier-crowned mountains for his cannon to pass into Italy, but the Gospel, without waiting for the picks and blasting agencies of the conqueror to open its path, climbed these mighty steps and took possession of the Grisons, the ancient Rhaetia. The bishop fled to the Tyrol; religious liberty was proclaimed in the territory; the Protestant faith took root, and here where are placed the sources of those waters which, rushing down the mountains’ sides, form rivers in the valleys below, were opened fountains of

¹⁰Ruchat, tom. 1, pp. 228-230. Christoffel, pp. 183, 185.

¹¹Scultet., Annal., Dec. 1, p. 290; apud Gerdesius, tom. 2, pp. 292 and 304, 306 Christoffel, pp. 182-185.

living waters. From the crest of the Alps, where it had now seated itself, the Gospel may be said to have looked down upon Italy. Not yet, however, was that land to be given to it. ¹²

It is interesting to think that the light spread on the east as far as to Constance and its lake, where a hundred years before John Huss had poured out his blood. After various reverses the movement of reform was at last crowned, in the year 1528, by the removal of the images and altars from the churches, and the abolition of all ceremonies, including that of the mass itself. ¹³ All the districts that lie along the banks of the Thur, of the Lake of Constance, and of the Upper Rhine, embraced the Gospel. At Mammern, which adjoins the spot where the Rhine issues from the lake, the inhabitants flung their images into the water. The statue of St. Blaise, on being thrown in, stood upright for a short while, and casting a reproachful look at the ungrateful and impious men who had formerly worshipped and were now attempting to drown it, swam across the lake to Cataborn on the opposite shore. So does a monk named Lang, whom Hotfinger quotes, relate. ¹⁴

After a protracted struggle, Protestantism gained the victory over the Papacy in Schaffhausen. The chief laborers there were Sebastian Heftmeister, Sebastian Hoffman, and Erasmus Ritter. On the Reformed worship being set up there, after the model of Zurich in 1529, the inhabitants of Eastern Switzerland generally may be said to have enjoyed the light of Protestant truth. The change that had passed over their land was like that which spring brings with it, when the snows melt, and the torrents gush forth, and the flowers appear, and all is fertility and verdure up to the very margin of the glacier. Yet more welcome was this spiritual spring-time, and a higher joy did it inspire. The winter—the winter of ascetic severities, vain mummeries, profitless services, and burdensome rites—was past, and the sweet light of a returning spring-time now shone upon the Swiss. From the husks of superstition they turned to feed on the bread and water of life.

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Perhaps the most efficient instrument in this reform remains to be mentioned. In every canton a little band of laborers arose at the

¹²Gerdesius, tom. 2, pp. 292, 293.

¹³Hottinger, helve., pp. 380-384. Sleidan, lib. 5, apud Gerdesius, tom. 2, p. 363.

¹⁴D'Aubigne, vol. 5, p. 306.

moment when they were needed. All of them were men of intrepidity and zeal, and most of them were pre-eminent in piety and scholarship. In this distinguished phalanx, Zwingle was the most distinguished; but in those around him there were worthy companions in arms, well entitled to fight side by side with him. But the little army was joined by another combatant, and that combatant was one common to all the German-speaking cantons - the Word of God. Luther's German edition of the New Testament appeared in 1522. Introduced into Switzerland, it became the mightiest instrumentality for the furtherance of the movement. It came close to the conscience and heart of the people. The pastor could not be always by their side, but in the Bible they had an instructor who never left them. By night as well as by day this voice spoke to them, cheering, inspiring, and upholding them. Of the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures in the mother tongue, Zwingle said, "Every peasant's cottage became a school, in which the highest art of all was practiced, the reading of the Old and New Testament; for the right and true Schoolmaster of His people is God, without Whom all languages and all arts are but nets of deception and treachery. Every cow and goose herd became thereby better instructed in the knowledge of salvation than the schoolmen."¹⁵ From the Bible eminently had Zwingle drawn his knowledge of truth. He felt how sweetly it works, yet how powerfully it convinces; and he desired above all things that the people of Switzerland should repair to the same fountains of knowledge. They did so, and hence the solidity, as well as the rapidity, of the movement. There is no more Herculean task than to change the opinions and customs of a nation, and the task is ten times more Herculean when these opinions and customs are stamped with the veneration of ages. It was a work of this magnitude which was accomplished in Switzerland in the short space of ten years. The truth entered, and the heart was cleansed from the pollution of lust, the understanding was liberated from the yoke of tradition and human doctrines, and the conscience was relieved from the burden of monastic observances. The emancipation was complete as well as speedy; the intellect, the heart, the conscience, all were renovated;

¹⁵Christoffel, p. 173.

and a new era of political and industrial life was commenced that same hour in the Reformed cantons.

Unhappily, the five Forest Cantons did not share in this renovation. The territory of these cantons contains, as every traveller knows, the grandest scenery in all Switzerland. It possesses the higher distinction of having been the cradle of Swiss independence. But those who had contended on many a bloody field to break the yoke of Austria, were content, in the sixteenth century, to remain under the yoke of Rome. They even threatened to bring back the Austrian arms, unless the Reformed cantons would promise to retrace their steps, and return to the faith they had cast off. It is not easy to explain why the heroes of the fourteenth century should have been so lacking in courage in the sixteenth. Their physical courage had been nursed in the presence of physical danger. They had to contend with the winter storms, with the avalanches and the mountain torrents; this made them strong in limb and bold in spirit. But the same causes which strengthen physical bravery sometimes weaken moral courage. They were insensible to the yoke that pressed upon the soul. If their personal liberty or their material interests were assailed, they were ready to defend them with their blood; but the higher liberty they were unable to appreciate. Their more secluded position shut them out from the means of information accessible to the other cantons. But the main cause of the difference lay in the foreign service to which these cantons were specially addicted. That service had demoralised them. Husbanding their blood that they might sell it for gold, they were deaf when liberty pleaded. Thus their grand mountains became the asylum of the superstitions in

700 which their fathers had lived, and the bulwark of that, base vassalage which the other cantons had thrown off.

Chapter 11: The Question of Forbidden Meats

The Foreign Enlistments—The Worship at Zurich as yet Unchanged—Zwingle makes a Beginning—Fasts and Forbidden Meats—Bishop of Constance Interferes—Zwingle’s Defense—The Council of Two Hundred—The Council gives no Decision—Opposition organised against Zwingle—Constance, Lausanne, and the Diet against Zwingle—First Swiss Edict of Persecution—Diet Petitioned to Cancel it—The Reformed Band—Luther Silent—Zwingle Raises his Voice—The Swiss Printing-press

Picture: View of Einsiedeln Abbey

Our attention must again be directed to the center of the movement at Zurich. In 1521 we find the work still progressing, although at every step it provokes opposition and awakens conflict. The first trouble grew out of the affair of foreign service. Charles V. and Francis I. were on the point of coming to blows on the plains of Italy. On the outlook for allies, they were making overtures to the Swiss. The men of Zurich promised their swords to the emperor. The other cantons engaged theirs to the French. Zwingle, as a patriot and a Christian minister, denounced a service in which Swiss would meet Swiss, and brother shed the blood of brother in a quarrel which was not theirs. To what purpose should he labor in Switzerland by the preaching of the Gospel to break the yoke of the Pope, while his fellow-citizens were shedding their blood in Italy to maintain it? Nevertheless, the solicitations of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Sion, who had sent an agent into the canton to enlist recruits for the emperor, to whom the Pope had now joined himself in alliance, prevailed, and a body of 2,700 Zurichers marched out at the gates, bound on this enterprise.¹ They won no laurels in the campaign; the usual miseries-wounds and death, widows and orphans, vices and

¹Christoffel, pp. 51, 52.

demoralization formed its sequel, and many a year passed before another body of Zurichers left their home on a similar errand. Zwingle betook himself more earnestly to the preaching of the Word of God, persuaded that only this could extinguish that love of gold which was entangling his countrymen with foreign princes, and inspire them with a horror of these mercenary and fratricidal wars into which this greed of sordid treasure was plunging them, to the ruin of their country.

The next point to be attacked by the Reformer was the fast-days of the Church. Hitherto no change had been made in the worship at Zurich. The altar with its furniture still stood; mass was still said; the images still occupied their niches; and the festivals were duly honoured as they came round. Zwingle was content, meanwhile, to sow the seed. He precipitated nothing, for he saw that till the understanding was enlightened, and the heart renovated, outward change would nought avail. But now, after four years' inculcation of the truth, he judged that his flock was not unprepared to apply the principles he had taught them. He made a beginning with the smaller matters. In expounding the fourth chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy, Zwingle took occasion to maintain that fasts appointed by the Church, in which certain meats were forbidden to be eaten at certain times, had no foundation in the Bible.² Certain citizens of Zurich, sober and worthy men for the most part, resolved to reduce Zwingle's doctrine to practice. They ate flesh on forbidden days. The monks took alarm. They saw that the whole question of ecclesiastical ordinances was at stake. If men could eat forbidden meats without purchasing permission from the Church, might not her commands be set at nought on other weightier points? What helped to increase the irritation were the words of Zwingle, in his sermon, which had given special umbrage to the war party: - "Many think that to eat flesh is improper, nay, a sin, although God has nowhere forbidden it; but to sell human flesh for slaughter and carnage, they hold to be no sin at all."³

It began to be clear how Zwingle's doctrine would work; its consequences threatened to be very alarming, indeed. The revenues

²Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 133.

³Christoffel, p. 58.

of the clergy it would diminish, and it would withdraw the halberds of the Swiss from the service of Rome and her allies. The enemies of the Reformation, who up to this time had watched the movement at Zurich in silence, but in no little uneasiness, began now to bestir themselves. The Church's authority and their own pockets were invaded. Numerous foes arose to oppose Zwingli.

[451] The tumult on this weighty affair of "forbidden meats" increased, and the Bishop of Constance, in whose diocese Zurich was situated, sent his suffragan, Melchior Bottli, and two others, to arrange matters. The suffragan-bishop appeared (April 9th, 1522) before the Great Council of Zurich. He accused Zwingli, without mentioning him by name, of preaching novelties subversive of the public peace; and said if he were allowed to teach men to transgress the ordinances of the Church, a time would soon come when no law would be obeyed, and a universal anarchy would overwhelm all things. ⁴ Zwingli met the charge of sedition and disorder by pointing to Zurich, "in which he had now been four years, preaching the Gospel of Jesus, and the doctrine of the apostles, with the sweat of his brow, and which was more quiet and peaceful than any other town in the Confederacy." "Is not then," he asked, "Christianity the best safeguard of the general security? Although all ceremonies were abolished, would Christianity therefore cease to exist? May not the people be led by another path than ceremonies to the knowledge of the truth, namely, by the path which Christ and His apostles pursued?" He concluded by asking that people should be at liberty to fast all the days of the year, if so it pleased them, but that no one should be compelled to fast by the threat of excommunication. ⁵ The suffragan had no other reply than to warn the councillors not to separate themselves from a Church out of which there was no salvation. To this the quick retort of Zwingli was, "that this need not alarm them, seeing the Church consists of all those in every place

[452] who believe upon the Lord Jesus-the Rock which St. Peter confessed;-it is out of this Church," said he, "that there is no salvation." The immediate result of this discussion - an augury of greater things

⁴Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 134.

⁵Ruchat, tom. 1, pp. 134,135.

to come-was the conversion of one of the deputies of the bishop to the Reformed faith - John Vanner.⁶

The Council of Two Hundred broke up without pronouncing any award as between the two parties. It contented itself with craving the Pope, through the Bishop of Constance, to give some solution of the controverted point, and with enjoining the faithful meanwhile to abstain from eating flesh in Lent. In this conciliatory course, Zwingle went thoroughly with the council. This was the first open combat between the champions of the two faiths; it had been fought in presence of the supreme council of the canton; the prestige of victory, all men felt, remained with the Reformers, and the ground won was not only secured, but extended by a treatise which Zwingle issued a few days thereafter on the free use of meats.⁷

Rome resolved to return to the charge. She saw in Zurich a second Wittemberg, and she thought to crush the revolt that was springing up there before it had gathered strength. When Zwingle was told that a new assault was preparing against him, he replied, "Let them come on; I fear them as the beetling cliff fears the waves that thunder at its feet." It was arranged that Zwingle should be attacked from four different quarters at once. The end of the Zurich movement, it was believed, was near.

The first attacking galley was fitted out in the port of Zurich; the other three sailed out of the episcopal harbour of Constance. One day, the aged Canon Hoffman tabled in the chapter of Zurich a long accusatory writing against the Reformer. This, which was the opening move of the projected campaign, was easily met. A few words of defense from Zwingle, and the aged canon was fain to flee before the storm which, at the instigation of others, he had drawn upon himself. "I gave him," writes Zwingle to Myconius, "a shaking such as an ox does, when with its horns it tosses a heap of straw up in the air."

The second attack came from the Bishop of Constance. In a pastoral letter which he issued to his clergy, he drew a frightful picture of the state of Christendom. On the frontier stood the Turk; and in the heart of the land were men, more dangerous than Turks,

⁶Christoffel, pp. 58-62.

⁷Gerdesius, tom 1, p. 270. Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 135.

sowing “damnable heresies.” The two, the Turk and the heresies, were so mixed up in the bishop’s address, that the people, whose minds the pastoral was intended to influence, could hardly avoid concluding that the one was the cause of the other, and that if they should imbibe the heresy, their certain doom was to fall by the scimitar of the Turk.

The third attack was meant to support the second. It came from the Bishop of Lausanne, and also took the shape of a pastoral letter to the clergy of his diocese. It forbade all men, under pain of being denied the Sacrament in their last hours, or refused Christian burial, to read the writings of Zwingle or of Luther, or to speak a word in private or public, to the disparagement of the “holy rites and customs of the Church.” By these means, the Roman ecclesiastics hoped utterly to discredit Zwingle with the people. They only extended the reputation they meant to ruin. The pastoral was taken to pieces by Zwingle in a tractate, entitled *Archeteles* (the beginning and the end), which over flowed with hard argument and

705 trenchant humor.⁸ The stereotyped and vapid phrases in which the bishops indulged, fell pointless compared with the convincing reasonings of the Reformer, backed as these were by facts drawn from the flagrant abuses of the Church, and the oppressions under which Switzerland groaned, and which were too patent to be denied by any save those who had a hand in their infliction, or were interested in their support.⁹

The first three attacks having failed to destroy Zwingle, or arrest his work, the fourth was now launched against him. It was the most formidable of the four. The Diet, the supreme temporal power in the Swiss Confederacy, was then sitting at Badin. To it the Bishop of Constance carried his complaint, importuning the court to suppress by the secular arm the propagation of the new doctrines by Zwingle and his fellow-laborers. The Diet was not likely to turn a deaf ear to the bishop’s solicitations. The majority of its members were pensioners of France and Italy, the friends of the “foreign service” of which Zwingle was the declared and uncompromising foe. They regarded the preacher of Zurich with no favorable eye. Only the

⁸Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 138. Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 273.

⁹Christoffel, pp. 66, 67.

summer before (1522), the Diet, at its meeting in Lucerne, had put upon its records an order “that priests whose sermons produced dissension and disorder among the people should desist from such preaching.” This was the first persecuting edict which disgraced the statute-book of Helvetia. ¹⁰

It had remained a dead letter hitherto, but now the Diet resolved to put it in force, and made a beginning by apprehending and imprisoning Urban Weiss, a Protestant pastor in the neighborhood of Baden. The monks, who saw that the Diet had taken its side in the quarrel between Rome and the Gospel, laid aside their timidity, and assuming the aggressive, strove by clamor and threats to excite the authorities to persecution. [453]

The Reformer of Zurich did not suffer himself to be intimidated by the storm that was evidently brewing. He saw in it an intimation of the Divine will that he should not only display the banner of truth more openly than ever in the pulpit of Zurich, but that he should wave it in the sight of the whole Confederacy. In the June following, he summoned a meeting of the friends of the Gospel at Einsiedeln. This summons was numerously responded to. Zwingle submitted two petitions to the assembly, to be signed by its members, one addressed to the Diet, and the other to the Bishop of the diocese. The petitions, which were in substance identical, prayed “that the preaching of the Gospel might not be forbidden, and that it might be permitted to the priests to marry.” A summary of the Reformed faith accompanied these petitions, that the members of the Diet might know what it was they were asked to protect, ¹¹ and an appeal was made to their patriotism, whether the diffusion of doctrines so wholesome, drawn from their original fountains in the Sacred Scriptures, would not tend to abolish the many evils under which their country confessedly groaned, and at once purify its private morals, and reinvigorate and restore its public virtue.

These petitions were received and no further cared for by those to whom they were presented. Nevertheless, their influence was great with the lower orders of the clergy, and the common people. The manifesto that accompanied them laid bare the corruption which

¹⁰Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 140.

¹¹Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 141. Gerdesius, tom. 1, pp. 270-277.

had taken place in the national religion, and the causes at work in the deterioration of the national spirit, and became a banner round which the, friends of Gospel truth, and the champions of the rights of conscience, leagued themselves. Thus banded together, they were abler to withstand their enemies. The cause grew and waxed strong by the efforts it made to overcome the obstacles it encountered. Its enemies became its friends. The storms that warred around the tree Zwingle had planted, instead of overturning it, cleared away the mephitic vapors with which the air around it was laden, and lent a greater luxuriance to its boughs. Its branches spread wider and yet wider around, and its fibres going still deeper into the soil, it firmly rooted itself in the land of the Swiss.

The friends of the Reformation in Germany were greatly encouraged and emboldened by what was now taking place in Switzerland. If Luther had suddenly and mysteriously vanished, Zwingle's voice had broken the silence which had followed the disappearance of the former. If the movement stood still for the time on the German plains, it was progressing on the mountains of Switzerland. The hopes of the Protestants lived anew. The friends of truth everywhere could not but mark the hand of God in raising up Zwingle when Luther had been withdrawn, and saw in it an indication of the Divine purpose, to advance the cause of Protestantism, although emperors and Diets were "taking counsel together" against it. The persecuted in the surrounding countries, turning their eyes to Switzerland, sought under the freer forms and more tolerant spirit of its government that protection which they were denied under their own. Thus from one day to another the friends of the movement multiplied in Helvetia.

The printing-press was a powerful auxiliary to the living agency at work in Switzerland. Zurich and Basle were the first of the Swiss towns to possess this instrumentality. There had been, it is true, a printing-press in Basle ever since the establishment of its University, in 1460, by Pope Pius II.; but Zurich had no printing-press till 1519, when Christopher Froschauer, from Bavaria, established one. Arriving in Zurich, Froschauer purchased the right of citizenship, and made the city of his adoption famous by the books he issued from his press. He became in this regard the right hand of Zwingle, to whom he afforded all the facilities in his power for printing and publishing

his works. Froschauer thus did great service to the movement. The third city of Switzerland to possess a printing-press was Geneva. A German named Koln, in 1523, printed there, in the Gothic character, the Constitutions of the Synod of the Diocese of Lausanne, by order of the bishop, Sebastien de Mont-Faulcon. The fourth city of the Swiss which could boast a printing establishment was Neuchatel. There lived Pierre de Wingle, commonly called Pirot Picard, who printed in 1535 the Bible in French, translated by Robert Olivetan, the cousin of Calvin. This Bible formed a largo folio, and was in the Gothic character. ¹²

¹²Ruchat, tom. 1, pp. 150, 151.

Chapter 12: Public Disputation at Zurich

Leo Juda and the Monk—Zwingle Demands a Public Disputation—Great Council Grants it—Six Hundred Members Assemble—Zwingle’s Theses—President Roist—Deputies of the Bishop of Constance—Attempt to Stifle Discussion—Zwingle’s Challenge—Silence—Faber rises—Antiquity—Zwingle’s Reply—Hoffman’s Appeal—Leo Juda—Doctor of Tübingen—Decree of Lords of Zurich—Altercation between Faber and Zwingle—End of Conference

Picture: Map of Switzerland

Picture: The Councillors Dissolving the Augustine Order of Monks in Zurich

Early in the following year (1523) the movement at Zurich advanced a step. An incident, in itself of small moment, furnished the occasion. Leo Juda, the school-companion of Zwingle at Basle, had just come to Zurich to assume the Curacy of St. Peter’s. One day the new pastor entered a chapel where an Augustine monk was maintaining with emphasis, in his sermon, “that man could satisfy Divine justice himself.” “Most worthy father,” cried Leo Juda, but in calm and friendly tones, “hear me a moment; and ye, good people, give ear, while I speak as becomes a Christian.” In a brief address he showed them, out of the Scriptures, how far beyond man’s power it was to save himself. A disturbance broke out in the church, some taking the side of the monk, and others that of the Curate of St. Peter’s. The Little Council summoned both parties before them. This led to fresh disturbances. Zwingle, who had been desirous for some time to have the grounds of the Reformed faith publicly discussed, hoping thereby to bear the banner of truth onwards, demanded of the Great Council a public disputation. Not otherwise, he said, could the public peace be maintained, or a wise rule laid down by which the preachers might guide themselves. He offered, if it was proved that he was in error, not only to keep silence for the future, but submit to

punishment; and if, on the other hand, it should be shown that his doctrine was in accordance with the Word of God, he claimed for the public preaching of it protection from the public authority.

Leave was given to hold a disputation, summonses were issued by the council to the clergy far and near; and the 29th day of January, 1523, was fixed on for the conference. ¹

It is necessary to look a little closely at what Zwingli now did, and the grounds and reasons of his procedure. The Reformer of Zurich held that the determination of religious questions appertains to the Church, and that the Church is made up of all those who profess Christianity according to the Scriptures. Why then did he submit this matter—the question as to which is the true Gospel—to the Great Council of Zurich, the supreme civil authority in the State?

Zwingli in doing so did not renounce his theory, but in reconciling his practice with his theory, in the present instance, it is necessary to take into account the following considerations. It was not possible for the Reformer of Zurich in the circumstances to realize his ideal; there was yet no Church organisation; and to submit such a question at large to the general body of the professors of the Reformed faith would have been, in their immature state of knowledge, to risk—nay, to invite—divisions and strifes. Zwingli, therefore, chose in preference the Council of Two Hundred as part of the Reformed body—as, in fact, the ecclesiastical and political representative of the Church. The case obviously was abnormal. Besides, in submitting this question to the council, Zwingli expressly stipulated that all arguments should be drawn from the Scriptures; that the council should decide according to the Word of God; and that the Church, or ecclesiastical community, should be free to accept or reject their decision, according as they might deem it to be founded on the Bible. ²

Practically, and in point of fact, this affair was a conference or disputation between the two great religious parties in presence of the council—not that the council could add to the truth of that which drew its authority from the Bible exclusively. It judged of the truth or falsehood of the matter submitted to it, in order that it might

¹Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 279. Christoffel, pp. 95, 96.

²Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 160.

determine the course it became the council to pursue in the exercise of its own functions as the rulers of the canton. It must hear and judge not for spiritual but for legal effects. If the Gospel which Zwingle and his fellow-laborers are publishing be true, the council will give the protection of law to the preaching of it.

[455] That this was the light in which Zwingle understood the matter is plain, we think, from his own words. "The matter," says he, "stands thus. We, the preachers of the Word of God in Zurich, on the one hand, give the Council of Two Hundred plainly to understand, that we commit to them that which properly it belongs to the whole Church to decide, only on the condition that in their consultations and conclusion they hold themselves to the Word of God alone; and, on the other hand, that they only act so far in the name of the Church, as the Church tacitly and voluntarily adopts their conclusions and ordinances."³ Zwingle discovers, in the very dawn of the Reformation, wonderfully clear views on this subject; although it is true that not till a subsequent period in the history of Protestantism was the distinction between things spiritual and things secular, and, correspondingly, between the authorities competent to decide upon the one and upon the other, clearly and sharply drawn; and, especially, not till a subsequent period were the principles that ought to regulate the exercise of the civil power about religious matters—in other words, the principles of toleration—discovered and proclaimed. It is in Switzerland, and at Zurich, that we find the first enunciation of the liberal ideas of modern times.

The lords of Zurich granted the conference craved by Zwingle, and published a formal decree to that effect. They invited all the cures or pastors, and all ecclesiastics of whatever degree, in all the towns of the canton. The Bishop of Constance, in whose diocese Zurich was situated, was also respectfully asked to be present, either in person or by deputy. The day fixed upon was the 29th of January. The disputation was to be conducted in the German language, all questions were to be determined by the Word of God, and it was added that after the conference had pronounced on all the questions

³Christoffel, p. 96.

discussed in it, only what was agreeable to Scripture was to be brought into the pulpit. ⁴

That an ecclesiastical Diet should convene in Zurich, and that Rome should be summoned before it to show cause why she should longer retain the supremacy she had wielded for a thousand years, appeared to the men of those times a most extraordinary and, indeed, portentous event. It made a great stir all over Switzerland. "There was much wondering," says Bullinger in his Chronicle, "what would come out of it." The city in which it was to be held prepared fittingly to receive the many venerable and dignified visitors who had been invited. Warned by the examples of Constance and Basle; Zurich made arrangements for maintaining public decorum during the session of the conference. The public-houses were ordered to be shut at an early hour; the students were warned that noise and riot on the street would be punished; all persons of ill-fame were sent out of the town, and two councillors, whose immoralities had subjected them to public criticism, were forbidden, meanwhile, attendance in the council chamber. These things betoken that already the purifying breath of the Gospel, more refreshing than the cool breeze from the white Alps on lake and city in the heat of summer, had begun to be felt in Zurich. Zwingle's enemies called it "a Diet of vagabonds," and loudly prophesied that all the beggars in Switzerland would infallibly grace it with their presence. Had the magistrates of Zurich expected guests of this sort, they would have prepared for their coming after a different fashion.

Zwingle prepared for the conference which he had been the main instrument of convoking, by composing an abridgment of doctrine, consisting of sixty-seven articles, which he got printed, and offered to defend from the Word of God. The first article struck at that dogma of Romanism which declares that "Holy Scripture has no authority unless it be sanctioned by the Church." The others were not less important, namely, that Jesus Christ is our only Teacher and Mediator; that He alone is the Head of believers; that all who are united to Him are members of His body, children of God, and Members of the Church; that it is by power from their Head alone that Christians can do any good act; that from Him, not from the Church

⁴Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 160.

or the clergy, comes the efficacy that sanctifies; that Jesus Christ is the one sovereign and eternal Priest; that the mass is not a sacrifice; that every kind of food may be made use of on all days; that monkery, with all that appertains to it-frocks, tonsures, and badges-is to be rejected; that Holy Scripture permits all men, without exception, to marry; that ecclesiastics, as well as others, are bound to obey the magistrate; that magistrates have received power from God to put malefactors ⁵ to death; that God alone can pardon sin; that He gives pardon solely for the love of Christ; that the pardon of sins for money is simony; and, in fine, that there is no purgatory after death.
6

By the publication of these theses, Zwingle struck the first blow in the coming campaign, and opened the discussions in the canton before the conference had opened them in the Council Hall of Zurich.
7

[456] When the clay (29th January, 1523) arrived, 600 persons assembled in the Town Hall. They met at the early hour of six. The conference included persons of rank, canons, priests, scholars, strangers, and many citizens of Zurich. The Bishop of Constance, the diocesan, was invited, ⁸ but appeared only by his deputies, John Faber, Vicar-General, and James von Anwyl, knight, and Grand Master of the Episcopal Court at Constance. Deputies of the Reformation appeared only from Bern and Schaffhausen; so weak as yet was the cause in the Swiss cantons.

The burgomaster, Marx Roist, presided. He was, says Christoffel, "a hoary-headed warrior, who had fought with Zwingle at Marignano." He had a son named Gaspar, a captain in the Pope's body-guard, nevertheless he himself was a staunch Reformer, and adhered faithfully to Zwingle, although Pope Adrian had tried to gain him by letters full of praise. ⁹ In a vacant space in the middle of the assembly sat Zwingle alone at a table. Bibles in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages lay open before him. All eyes were turned upon him. He

⁵This article would appear to be directed against the teaching of the Anabaptists, who began to appear about the year 1522.

⁶Ruchat, tom 1, p. 161.

⁷Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 279. Christoffel, p. 99.

⁸Hotting, 106, 107. Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 160.

⁹Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 161.

was there to defend the Gospel he had preached, which so many, now face to face with him, had loudly denounced as heresy and sedition, and the cause of the, strifes that were beginning to rend the cantons. His position was not unlike that of Luther at Worms. The cause was the same, only the tribunal was less august, the assemblage less brilliant, and the immediate risks less formidable. But the faith that upheld the champion of Worms also animated the hero of Zurich. [458]

The venerable president rose. He stated briefly why the conference had been convoked, adding, "If any one has anything to say against the doctrine of Zwingle, now is the time to speak." ¹⁰ All eyes were turned on the bishop's representative, John Faber. Faber had formerly been a friend of Zwingle, but having visited Rome and been flattered by the Pope, he was now thoroughly devoted to the Papal interests, and had become one of Zwingle's bitterest opponents.

Faber sat still, but James von Anwyl rose. He tried to throw oil upon the waters, and to allay the storm raging, not indeed in the council chamber- for there all was calm-but in Zurich. The deputies, he said, were present not to engage in controversy, but to learn the unhappy divisions that were rending the canton, and to employ their power in healing them. He concluded by dropping a hint of a General Council, that was soon to meet, and which would amicably arrange this whole matter.

Zwingle saw through a device which threatened to rob him, of all the advantage that he hoped to gain from the conference. "This was now," he said, "his fifth year in Zurich. He had preached God's message to men as contained in His own Word;" and, submitting his theses, he offered to make good before the assembly their agreement with the Scriptures; and looking round upon all, said, "Go on then, in God's name. Here I am to answer you." ¹¹ Thus again challenged, Faber, who wore a red hat, rose, but only to attempt to stifle discussion, by holding out the near prospect of a General Council. "It would meet at Nuremberg within a year's time." ¹²

"And why not," instantly retorted the Reformer, "at Erfurt or Wittenberg?" Zwingle entered fully into the grounds of his doctrine,

¹⁰Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 279.

¹¹Christoffel, p. 102.

¹²Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 162.

and closed by expressing his convictions that a General Council they would not soon see, and that the one now convened was as good as any the Pope was likely to give them. Had they not in this conference, doctors, theologians, jurisconsults, and wise men, just as able to read the Word of God in the original Hebrew and Greek, and as well qualified to determine all questions by this, the alone infallible rule, as any Council they were ever likely to see in Christendom? ¹³

A long pause followed Zwingle's address. He stood unaccused in the midst of those who had so loudly blamed and condemned him out of doors. Again he challenged his opponents: he challenged them a second time, he challenged them a third time. No one spoke. At length Faber rose—not to take up the gauntlet which Zwingle had thrown down, but to tell how he had discomfited in argument the pastor of Fislisbach, whom, as we have already said, the Diet at Baden had imprisoned; and to express his amazement at the pass to which things had come, when the ancient usages which had lasted for twelve centuries were forsaken, and it was calmly concluded “that Christendom had been in error fourteen hundred years!”

The Reformer quickly replied that error was not less error because the belief of it had lasted fourteen hundred years, and that in the worship of God antiquity of usage was nothing, unless ground or warrant for it could be found in the Sacred Scriptures. ¹⁴

He denied that the false dogmas and the idolatrous practices which he was combating came from the first ages, or were known to the early Christians. They were the growth of times less enlightened and men less holy. Successive Councils and doctors, in comparatively modern times, had rooted up the good and planted the evil in its room. The prohibition of marriage to priests he instanced as a case in point. ¹⁵

Master Hoffman, of Schaffhausen, then rose. He had been branded, he said, as a heretic at Lausanne, and chased from that city for no other offense than having preached, agreeably to the Word of God, against the invocation of the saints. Therefore he must adjure the Vicar-General, Faber, in the name of God, to show him

¹³Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 163.

¹⁴Christoffel, pp. 105, 106.

¹⁵Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 164.

those passages in the Bible in which such invocation is permitted and enjoined. To this solemn appeal Faber remained silent.

Leo Juda next came forward. He had but recently come to Zurich, he said, as a laborer with Zwingle in the work of the Gospel. He was not able to see that the worship of the Church of Rome had any foundation in Scripture. He could not recommend to his people any other intercessor than the one Mediator, even Christ Jesus, nor could he bid them repose on any other expiation of their sins than His death and passion on the cross. If this belief of his was false, he implored Faber to show him from the Word of God a better way. [459]

This second appeal brought Faber to his feet. But, so far as proof or authority from the Bible was concerned, he might as well have remained silent. Not deigning even a glance at the Canon of Inspiration, he went straight to the armoury of the Roman Church. He pleaded first of all the unanimous comment of the Fathers, and secondly the Litany and canon of the mass, which assures us that we ought to invoke the mother of God and all the saints. Coming at last to the Bible, but only to misinterpret it, he said that the Virgin herself had authorised this worship, inasmuch as she had foretold that it would be rendered to her in all coming time: "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." ¹⁶ And not less had her cousin Elizabeth sanctioned it when she gave expression to her surprise and humility in these words: "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" ¹⁷ These proofs he thought ought to suffice, and if they were not to be held as establishing his point, nothing remained for him but to hold his peace. ¹⁸

The Vicar-General found a supporter in Martin Blantsch, Doctor of Tubingen. He was one of those allies who are more formidable to the cause they espouse than to that which they combat. "It was a prodigious rashness," said Dr. Blantsch, "to censure or condemn usages established by Councils which had assembled by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The decisions of the first four General Councils ought to receive the same reverence as the Gospel itself: so did the canon law enjoin (Distinction XV.); for the Church, met in Council by the Holy Spirit, cannot err. To oppose its decrees was to

¹⁶Luke 1:48.

¹⁷Ibid. 1:43.

¹⁸Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 105.

oppose God. 'He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me.' ¹⁹

It was not difficult for Zwingli to reply to arguments like these. They presented a pompous array of Councils, canons, and ages; but this procession of authorities, so grandly marshalled, lacked one thing—an apostle or evangelist to head it. Lacking this, what was it? Not a chain of living witnesses, but a procession of lay figures. Seeing this discomfiture of the Papal party, Sebastien Hoffman, the pastor of Schaffhausen, and Sebastien Meyer, of Bern, rose and exhorted the Zurichers to go bravely forward in the path on which they had entered, and to permit neither the bulls of the Popes nor the edicts of the Emperor to turn them from it. This closed the morning's proceedings.

After dinner the conference re-assembled to hear the decree of the lords of Zurich. The edict was read. It enjoined, in brief, that all preachers both in the city and throughout the canton, laying aside the traditions of men, should teach from the pulpit only what they were able to prove from the Word of God. ²⁰ "But," interposed a country cure, "what is to be done in the case of those priests who are not able to buy those books called the New Testament?" So much for his fitness to instruct his hearers in the doctrines of a book which he had never seen. "No priest," replied Zwingli, "is so poor as to be unable to buy a New Testament, if he seriously wishes to possess one; or, if he be really unable, he will find some pious citizen willing to lend him the money." ²¹

The business was at an end, and the assembly was about to separate. Zwingli could not refrain giving thanks to God that now his native land was about to enjoy the free preaching of the pure Gospel. But the Vicar-General, as much terrified as Zwingli was gladdened by the prospect, was heard to mutter that had he seen the theses of the pastor of Zurich a little sooner, he would have dealt them a complete refutation, and shown from Scripture the authority

¹⁹Luke 10:16.

²⁰Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 167. Sleidan, bk. 3, p. 57. Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 279: "Ut traditionibus hominum omissis, Evangelium pure doceatur e Veteris et Novi Testamenti libris" (That, laying aside the traditions of man, the pure Gospel may be taught from the books of the Old and New Testament).

²¹Zwing. Op., 621, 622; apud Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 167.

of oral traditions, and the necessity of a living judge on earth to decide controversies. Zwingle begged him to do so even yet. "No, not here," said Faber; "come to Constance." "With all my heart," replied Zwingle; but he added in a quiet tone, and the Vicar-General could hardly be insensible to the reproach his words implied, "You must give me a safe-conduct, and show me the same good faith at Constance which you have experienced at Zurich; and further, I give you warning that I will accept no other judge than Holy Scripture." "Holy Scripture!" retorted Faber, somewhat angrily; "there are many things against Christ which Scripture does not forbid: for example, where in Scripture do we read that a man may not take his own or his sister's daughter to wife?" "Nor," replied Zwingle, "does it stand in Scripture that a cardinal should have thirty livings. Degrees of relationship further removed than the one you have just specified are forbidden, therefore we conclude that nearer degrees are so." He ended by expressing his surprise that the Vicar-General should have come so long a way to deliver such sterile speeches. [460]

Faber, on his part, taunted the Reformer with always harping on the same string, namely, Scripture, adding, "Men might live in peace and concord and holiness, even if there were no Gospel." The Vicar-General, by this last remark, had crowned his own discomfiture. The audience could no longer restrain their indignation. They started to their feet and left the assembly-hall. So ended the conference. ²²

²²Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 168. Christoffel, pp. 107, 108. D'Aubigne, vol. 3, pp. 226, 227.

Chapter 13: Dissolution of Conventual and Monastic Establishments

Zwingle's Treatise—An After-fight—Zwingle's Pulpit Lectures—Superstitious Usages and Payments Abolished—Gymnasium Founded—Convents Opened—Zwingle on Monastic Establishments—Dissolution of Monasteries—Public Begging Forbidden—Provision for the Poor

Picture: Hottinger Destroying the Image

Picture: Crypt of the; Cathedral of Basle (1505)

Victory had been gained, but Zwingle was of opinion that he had won it somewhat too easily. He would have preferred the assertion of the truth by a sharp debate to the dumb opposition of the priests. He set to work, however, and in a few months produced a treatise on the established ordinances and ceremonies, in which he showed how utterly foundation was lacking for them in the Word of God. The luminous argument and the "sharp wit" of the volume procured for it an instant and wide circulation. Men read it, and asked why these usages should be longer continued. The public mind was now ripe for the changes in the worship which Zwingle had hitherto abstained from making. This is a dangerous point in all such movements. Not a few Reformations have been wrecked on this rock. The Reformer of Zurich was able, partly by aid of the council, partly by the knowledge he had sown among the people, to steer his vessel safely past it. He managed to restrain the popular enthusiasm within its legitimate channel, and he made that a cleansing stream which otherwise would have become a devastating torrent.

Faber took care that the indignation his extraordinary arguments had awakened in the Zurichers should not cool down. Like the Parthian, he shot his arrows in his flight. No sooner was the Vicar-General back in Constance, than he published a report of the conference, in which he avenged his defeat by the most odious and calumnious attacks on Zwingle and the men of Zurich. This libel

was answered by certain of the youth of Zurich, in a book entitled the Hawk-pluckings. It was “a sharp polemic, full of biting wit.” It had an immense sale, and Faber gained as little in this after-fight as he had done in the main battle. ¹

The Reformer did not for a moment pause or lose sight of his grand object, which was to restore the Gospel to its rightful place in the sanctuary, and in the hearts of the people. He had ended his exposition of the Gospel of St. Matthew. He proceeded next to the consideration of the Acts of the Apostles, that he might be able to show his hearers the primitive model of the Church, and how the Gospel was spread in the first ages. Then he went on to the 1st Epistle to Timothy, that he might unfold the rules by which all Christians ought to frame their lives. He turned next to the Epistle to the Galatians, that he might reach those who, like some in St. Paul’s days, had still a weakness for the old leaven; then to the two Epistles of St. Peter, that he might show his audience that St. Peter’s authority did not rise above that of St. Paul, who, on St. Peter’s confession, had fed the flock equally with himself. Last of all he expounded the Epistle to the Hebrews, that he might fix the eyes of his congregation on a more glorious priesthood than that of the Jews of old, or that of Rome in modern times—on that of the great Monarch and Priest of His Church, who by His one sole sacrifice had sanctified for ever them that believe.

Thus did he place the building which he was laboring to rear on the foundations of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. And now it seemed to him that the time for practical reformation had arrived. ²

[461]

This work began at the cathedral, the institution with which he himself was connected. The original letter of grant front Charlemagne limited the number of canons upon this foundation to thirteen. There were now more than fifty canons and chaplains upon it. These had forgotten their vow, at entry, framed in accordance with the founder’s wish, “to serve God with praise and prayer” and “to supply public worship to the inhabitants of hill and valley.” Zwingle was the only worker on this numerous staff; almost all the rest lived

¹Christoffel, p. 109.

²Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 169.

in downright idleness, which was apt on occasion to degenerate into something worse. The citizens grumbled at the heavy rents and numerous dues which they paid to men whose services were so inappreciable. Feeling the justice of these complaints, Zwingle devised a plan of reform, which the council passed into a law, the canons themselves concurring. The more irritating of the taxes for the ecclesiastical estate were abolished. No one was any longer to be compelled to pay for baptism, for extreme unction, for burial, for burial-candles, for grave-stones, or for the tolling of the great bell of the minster.³ The canons and chaplains who died off were not to be replaced; only a competent number were to be retained, and these were to serve as ministers of parishes. The amount of benefices set free by the decease of canons was to be devoted to the better payment of the teachers in the Gymnasium of Zurich, and the founding of an institution of a higher order for the training of pastors, and the instruction of youth generally in classical learning.

In place of the choir-service, mumbled drowsily over by the canons, came the “prophesying” or exposition of Scripture (1525), which began at eight every morning, and was attended by all the city clergy, the canons, the chaplains, and scholars.⁴ Of the new school mentioned above, Oswald Myconius remarks that “had Zwingle survived, it would not have found its equal anywhere.” As it was, this school was a plant that bore rich fruit after Zwingle was in his grave. Of this the best proof is the glory that was shed on Zurich by the numbers of her sons who became illustrious in Church and State, in literature and science.

Reform was next applied to the conventual and monastic establishments. They fell almost without a blow. As melts the ice on the summit of the Alps when spring sets in, so did the monastic asceticism of Zurich give way before the warm breath of evangelism. Zwingle had shown from the pulpit that these institutions were at war alike with the laws of nature, the affections of the heart, and the precepts of Scripture. From the interior of some of these places, cries were heard for deliverance from the conventual vow. The council of Zurich, 17th June, 1523, granted their wish, by giving permission to

³Ibid., tom. 1, p. 181.

⁴Christoffel, pp. 101-113.

the nuns to return to society. There was no compulsion; the convent door was open; the inmates might go or they might remain. Many quitted the cloister, but others preferred to end their days where they had spent their lives. ⁵

Zwingle next set about preparing for the dissolution of the monastic houses. He began by diffusing rational ideas on the subject in the public mind. "It has been argued," said he, "that a priest must in some way distinguish himself from other men. He must have a bald pate, or a cowl, or a frock, or wooden shoes, or go bare-foot. No," said Zwingle, "he who distinguishes himself from others by such badges but raises against himself the charge of hypocrisy. I will tell you Christ's way: it is to excel in humility and a useful life. With that ornament we shall need no outward badge; the very children will know us, nay, the devil himself will know us to be none of his. When we lose our true worth and dignity, then we garnish ourselves with shorn crowns, frocks, and knotted cords; and men admire our clothes, as the children stare at the gold-bespangled mule of the Pope. I will tell you a labor more fruitful both to one's self and to others than singing matins, aves, and vespers: namely, to study the Word of God, and not to cease till its light shine into the hearts of men."

"To snore behind the walls of a cloister," he continued, "is not to worship God. But to visit widows and orphans, that is to say, the destitute in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world, that is to worship God. The world in this place ([James 1:27](#)) does not mean hill and valley, field and forest, water, lakes, towns and villages, but the lusts of the world, as avarice, pride, uncleanness, intemperance. These vices are more commonly to be met with within the walls of a convent than in the world abroad. I speak not of envy and hatred which have their habitation among this crew, and yet these are all greater sins than those they would escape by fleeing to a cloister... Therefore let the monks lay aside all their badges, their cowls, and their regulations, and let them put themselves on a level with the rest of Christendom, and unite themselves to it, if they would truly obey the Word of God." ⁶

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⁵Christoffel, p. 115.

⁶Christoffel, pp. 118, 119.

In accordance with these rational and Gospel principles, came a resolution passed by the council in December, 1524, to reform the monasteries.

It was feared that the monks would offer resistance to the dissolution of their orders, but the council laid their plans so wisely, that before the fathers knew that their establishments were in danger the blow had been struck. On a Saturday afternoon the members of council, accompanied by delegates from the various guilds, the three city ministers, and followed by the town militia, presented themselves in the Augustine monastery. They summoned the inmates into their presence, and announced to them the resolution of the council dissolving their order. Taken unawares, and awed by the armed men who accompanied the council, the monks at once yielded. So quietly fell the death-blow on the monkish establishments of Zurich.⁷

“The younger friars who showed talent and inclination,” says Christoffel, “were made to study: the others had to learn a trade. The strangers were furnished with the necessary travelling money to go to their homes, or to re-enter a cloister in their own country; the frail and aged had a competent settlement made upon them, with the condition attached that they were regularly to attend the Reformed service, and give offense to none either by their doctrines or lives. The wealth of the monasteries was for the most part applied to the relief of the poor or the sick, since forsooth the cloisters called themselves the asylums of the poor; and only a small part was reserved for the churches and the schools.”

“Every kind of door and street beggary was forbidden,” adds Christoffel, “by an order issued in 1525, while at the same time a competent support was given to the home and stranger poor. Thus, for example, the poor scholars were not allowed any longer to beg their living by singing beneath the windows, as was customary before the Reformation. Instead of this a certain number of them (sixteen from the canton Zurich, four strangers) received daily soup and bread, and two shillings weekly. Stranger beggars and pilgrims were allowed only to pass through the town, and nowhere to beg.”⁸

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⁷Ibid., p. 119.

⁸Christoffel, pp. 119, 120.

In short, the entire amount realised by the dissolution of the monastic orders was devoted to the relief of the poor, the ministry of the sick, and the advancement of education. The council did not feel at liberty to devote these funds to any merely secular object.

“We shall so act with cloister property,” said they, “that we can neither be reproached before God nor the world. We might not have the sin upon our consciences of applying the wealth of one single cloister to fill the coffers of the State.”⁹

The abrogation of the law of celibacy fittingly followed the abolition of the monastic vow. This was essential to the restoration of the ministerial office to its apostolic dignity and purity. Many of the Reformed pastors took advantage of the change in the law, among others Leo Juda, Zwingle’s friend. Zwingle himself had contracted in 1522 a private marriage, according to the custom of the times, with Anna Reinhard, widow of John Meyer von Knonau, a lady of great beauty and of noble character. On the 2nd of April, 1524, he publicly celebrated his marriage in the minster church. Zwingle had made no secret whatever of his private espousals, which were well known to both friend and foe, but the public acknowledgment of them was hailed by the former as marking the completion of another stage in the Swiss Reformation.¹⁰

Thus step by step the movement advanced. Its path was a peaceful one. That changes so great in a country where the government was so liberal, and the expression of public opinion so unrestrained, should have been accomplished without popular tumults, is truly marvellous. This must be ascribed mainly to the enlightened maxims that guided the procedure of the Reformer. When Zwingle wished to do away with any oppressive or superstitious observance; he sifted and exposed the false dogma on which it was founded, knowing that when he had overthrown it in the popular belief, it would soon fall in the popular practice. When public sentiment was ripe, the people would go to the legislative chamber, and would there find the magistrates prepared to put into the form of law what was already the judgment and wish of the community; and thus the law, never outrunning public opinion would be willingly obeyed. In this way

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⁹Ibid., p. 120, foot-note.

¹⁰See D’Aubigne, 8, 13, foot-note, and Christoffel, pp. 122,123, on the time and manner of Zwingli’s marriage.

Zwingle had already accomplished a host of reforms. He had opened the door of the convents; he had suppressed the monastic orders; he had restored hundreds of idle men to useful industry; he had set free thousands of pounds for the erection of hospitals and the education of youth; and he had closed a fountain of pollution, only the more defiling because it issued from the sanctuary, and restored purity to the altar, in the repeal of the law of clerical celibacy. But the Reformation did not stop here. More arduous achievement awaited it.

Chapter 14: Discussion on Images and the Mass

Christ's Death—Zwingle's Fundamental
Position—Iconoclasts—Hottinger—Zwingle on
Image-worship—Conference of all Switzerland summoned—900
Members Assemble—Preliminary Question—The
Church—Discussion on Images—Books that Teach Nothing—The
Mass Discussed—It is Overthrown—Joy of Zwingle—Relics
Inferred

The images were still retained in the churches, and mass still formed part of the public worship. Zwingle now began to prepare the public mind for a reform in both particulars—to lead men from the idol to the one true God; from the mass which the Church had invented to the Supper which Christ had instituted. The Reformer began by laying down this doctrine in his teaching, and afterwards more formally in eighteen propositions or conclusions which he published - “that Christ, Who offered Himself once for all upon the cross, is a sufficient and everlasting Sacrifice for the sins of all who believe upon Him; and that, therefore, the mass is not a sacrifice, but the memorial of Christ's once offering upon the cross, and the visible seal of our redemption through Him.”¹ This great truth received in the public mind, he knew that the mass must fall.

But all men had not the patience of Zwingle. A young priest, Louis Hetzer, of fiery zeal and impetuous temper, published a small treatise on images, which led to an ebullition of popular feeling. Outside the city gates, at Stadelhofen, stood a crucifix, richly ornamented, and with a frequent crowd of devotees before it. It gave annoyance to not a few of the citizens, and among others to a shoemaker, named Nicholas Hottinger, “a worthy man,” says Bullinger, “and well versed in his Bible.” One day as Hottinger stood surveying the image, its owner happened to come up, and Hottinger demanded of him “when he meant to take that thing away?” “Nobody bids you

¹Zwing. Op., tom. 1, fol. 35. Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 280.

worship it, Nicholas,” was the reply. “But don’t you know,” said Hottinger, “that the Word of God forbids images?” “If,” replied the owner, “you feel yourself empowered to remove it, do so.” Hottinger took this for consent, and one morning afterwards, the shoemaker, coming to the spot with a party of his fellow-citizens, dug a trench round the crucifix, when it fell with a crash. ² A violent outcry was raised by the adherents of the old faith against these iconoclasts. “Down with these men!” they shouted; “they are church-robbers, and deserving of death.”

[465] The commotion was increased by an occurrence that soon thereafter happened. Lawrence Meyer, Vicar of St. Peter’s, remarked one day to a fellow-vicar, that when he thought of the people at the church-door, pale with hunger, and shivering from want of clothes, he had a great mind to knock down the idols on the altars, and take their silken robes and costly jewels, and therewith buy food and raiment for the poor. On Lady-day, before three o’clock in the morning, the plates, rolls, images, and other symbols had all disappeared from St. Peter’s Church. Suspicion, of course, fell upon the vicar. The very thing which he had confessed having a strong desire to do, had been done; and yet it may have been another and not the vicar who did it, and as the deed could not be traced to him, nothing more came of it so far as Meyer was concerned. ³

Still the incident was followed by important consequences. Zwingle had shrunk from the discussion of the question of worshipping by images, but now he felt the necessity of declaring his sentiments. He displayed in this, as in every reform which he instituted, great breadth of view, and singular moderation in action. As regarded images in churches, he jocularly remarked that they did not hurt himself, for his short-sightedness prevented him seeing them. He was no enemy to pictures and statues, if used for purposes purely aesthetic. The power of bodying forth beautiful forms, or lofty ideas, in marble or on canvas, was one of the good gifts of God. He did not, therefore, condemn the glass paintings in the

²Christoffel, p. 126. Hottinger was afterwards martyred at Lucerne. But this, and other events outside the canton of Zurich, will come more fully under our notice when we advance to the second stage of the Swiss Reformation—that, namely, from the establishment of the Protestant faith at Zurich, 1525, to the battle of Kappel, 1531.

³Christoffel, p. 126.

church windows, and similar ornaments in sacred buildings, which were as little likely to mislead the people as the cock on the church steeple, or the statue of Charles the Great at the minster. And even with regard to images which were superstitiously used, he did not approve their unauthorised and irregular destruction. Let the abuse be exposed and sifted, and it would fall of itself. "The child is not let down from the cradle," said he, "till a rest has been presented to it to aid it in walking." When the knowledge of the one true God has entered the heart., the man will no longer be able to worship by an image.

"On the other hand," said he, "all images must be removed which serve the purposes of a superstitious veneration, because such veneration is idolatry. First of all, where are the images placed? Why, on the altar, before the eyes of the worshippers. Will the Romanists permit a man to stand on the altar when mass is being celebrated? Not they. Images, then, are higher than men, and yet they have been cut out of a willow-tree by the hands of men. But further, the worshippers bow to them, and bare the head before them. Is not that the very act which God has forbidden? 'Thou shalt not bow down unto them.' Consider if this be not open idolatry."

"Further," argued Zwingle, "we burn costly incense before them, as did the heathen to their idols. Here we commit a two-fold sin. If we say that thus we honour the saints, it was thus that the heathen honoured their idols. If we say that it is God we honour, it is a form of worship which no apostle or evangelist ever offered to Him."

"Like the heathen, do we not call those images by the names of those they represent? We name one piece of carved wood the Mother of God, another St. Nicholas, a third Holy Hildegarde, and so on. Have we not heard of men breaking into prisons and slaying those who had taken away their images, and when asked why they did so, they replied, 'Oh, they have burned or stolen our blessed Lord God and the saints'? Whom do they call our Lord God? The idol."

"Do we not give to these idols what we ought to give to the poor? We form them of massive gold or silver, or we overlay them with some precious metal. We hang rich clothing upon them, we adorn them with chains and precious jewels. We give to the bedizened image what we ought to give to the poor, who are the living images of God."

“But, say the Papists,” continued Zwingle, “images are the books of the simple. Tell me, where has God commanded us to learn out of such a book? How comes it that we have all had the cross so many years before us, and yet have not learned salvation in Christ, or true faith in God? Place a child before an image of the Savior and

726 give it no instruction. Will it learn from the image that Christ suffered for us? It is said, ‘Nay, but it must be taught also by the Word.’ Then the admission is made that it must be instructed not by the image, but by the Word.”

“It is next insisted the images incite to devotion. But where has God taught us that we should do Him such honour through idols, and by the performance of certain gestures before them? God everywhere rejects such worship. Therefore, while the Gospel is preached, and men are instructed in the pure doctrine, the idols ought to be removed that men may not fall back into the same errors, for as storks return to their old nests, so do men to their old errors, if the way to them be not barred.”⁴

[466] To calm the public excitement, which was daily growing stronger, the magistrates of Zurich resolved to institute another disputation in October of that same year, 1523.⁵

The two points which were to be discussed were Images and the Mass. It was meant that this convocation should be even more numerous than the former. The Bishops of Constance, Coire, and Basle were invited. The governments of the twelve cantons were asked to send each a deputy.⁶ When the day arrived, the 26th of October, not fewer than 900 persons met in the Council Hall. None of the bishops were present. Of the cantons only two, Schaffhausen and St. Gall, sent deputies. Nevertheless, this assembly of 900 included 350 priests.⁷ At a table in the middle sat Zwingle and Leo Juda, with the Bible in the original tongues open before them. They

⁴Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 183. Christoffel, pp. 126-130. So did Zwingli, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, reason on the question of the worshipping of God by images. He was followed in the same line of argument by the French and English divines who rose later in the same century. And at this day the Protestant controversialist can make use of but the same weapons that Zwingli employed.

⁵Sleidan, bk. iv., p. 66.

⁶Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 290.

⁷Ruchat, tom. 1, pp. 182,183.

were appointed to defend the theses, which all were at liberty to impugn.

There was a preliminary question, Zwingle felt, which met them on the threshold: namely, what authority or right had a conference like this to determine points of faith and worship? This had been the exclusive prerogative of Popes and Councils for ages. If the Popes and Councils were right, then the assembly now met was an anarchical one: if the assembly was right, then Popes and Councils had been guilty of usurpation by monopolising a power which belonged to more than themselves. This led Zwingle to develop his theory of the Church; whence came she? what were her powers, and of whom was she composed?

The doctrine now propounded for the first time by Zwingle, and which has come since to be the doctrine held on this head by a great part of Reformed Christendom, was, in brief, that the Church is created by the Word of God; that her one and only Head is Christ; that the fountain of her laws, and the charter of her rights, is the Bible; and that she is composed of all those throughout the world who profess the Gospel.

This theory carried in it a great ecclesiastical revolution. It struck a blow at the root of the Papal supremacy. It laid in the dust the towering fabric of the Roman hierarchy. The community at Zurich, professing their faith in the Lord Jesus and their obedience to His Word, Zwingle held to be the Church—the Church of Zurich—and he maintained that it had a right to order all things conformable to the Bible. Thus did he withdraw the flock over which he presided from the jurisdiction of Rome, and recover for them the rights and liberties in which the Scriptures had vested the primitive believers, but of which the Papal See had despoiled them.⁸

The discussion on images was now opened. The thesis which the Reformer undertook to maintain, and for which he had prepared the public mind of Zurich by the teaching stated above, was “that the use of images in worship is forbidden in the Holy Scriptures, and therefore ought to be done away with.” This battle was an easy one, and Zwingle left it almost entirely in the hands of Leo Juda. The latter established the proposition in a clear and succinct manner by

⁸Christoffel, p. 132.

proofs from the Bible. At this stage the combat was like to have come to an end for want of combatants. The opposite party were most unwilling to descend into the arena. One and then another was called on by name, but all hung back. The images were in an evil case; they could not speak for themselves, and their advocates seemed as dumb as they. ⁹ At length one ventured to hint that “one should not take the staff out of the hand of the weak Christian, on which he leans, or one should give him another, else he falls to the ground.” “Had useless parsons and bishops,” replied Zwingli, “zealously preached the Word of God, as has been inculcated upon them, it were not come to this, that the poor ignorant people, unacquainted with the Word, must learn Christ only through paintings on the wall or wooden figures.” The debate, if such it could be called, and the daylight were ending together. The president, Hoffmeister of Schaffhausen, rose. “The Almighty and Everlasting God be praised,” said he, “that He hath vouchsafed us the victory.” Then turning to the councillors of Zurich, he exhorted them to remove the images from the churches, and declared the sitting at an end. “Child’s play,” said Zwingli, “this has been; now comes a weightier and more important matter.” ¹⁰

That matter was the mass. Truly was it styled “weightier.” For more than three centuries it had held its place in the veneration of the people, and had been the very soul of their worship. Like a skillful and wary general, Zwingli had advanced his attacking lines nearer and nearer that gigantic fortress against which he was waging successful battle. He had assailed first the outworks; now he was to strike a blow at the inner citadel. Should it fall, he would regard the conquest as complete, and the whole of the contested territory as virtually in his hands.

[467] On the 27th of October the discussion on the mass was opened. We have previously given Zwingli’s fundamental proposition, which was to this effect, that Christ’s death on the cross is an all-sufficient and everlasting sacrifice, and that therefore the Eucharist is not a sacrifice, but a memorial. “He considered the Supper to be a remembrance instituted by Christ, at which He will be present, and whereby He, by means of His word of promise and outward signs,

⁹Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 291. Christoffel, p. 133.

¹⁰Christoffel, pp. 132-135.

will make the blessing of His death, whose inward power is eternal, to be actually effective in the Christian for the strengthening and assurance of faith.”¹¹ This cut the ground from beneath “transubstantiation” and the “adoration of the Host.” Zwingli led the debate. He expressed his joy at the decision of the conference the day before on the subject of images, and went on to expound and defend his views on the yet graver matter which it was now called to consider. “If the mass is no sacrifice,” said Stienli of Schaffhausen, “then have all our fathers walked in error and been damned!” “If our fathers have erred,” replied Zwingli, “what then? Is not their salvation in the hands of God, like that of all men who have erred and sinned? Who authorises us to anticipate the judgment of God? The authors of these abuses will, without doubt, be punished by God; but who is damned, and who is not, is the prerogative of God alone to decide. Let us not interfere with the judgments of God. It is sufficiently clear to us that they have erred.”¹² When he had finished, Dr. Vadian, who was president for the day, demanded if there was any one present prepared to impugn from Scripture the doctrine which had been maintained in their hearing. He was answered only with silence. He put the question a second time. The greater number expressed their agreement with Zwingli. The Abbots of Kappel and Stein “replied nothing.” The Provost of the Chapter of Zurich quoted in defense of the mass a passage from the apocryphal Epistle of St. Clement and St. James. Brennwald, Provost of Embrach, avowed himself of Zwingli’s sentiments. The Canons of Zurich were divided in opinion. The chaplains of the city, on being asked whether they could prove from Scripture that the mass was a sacrifice, replied that they could not. The heads of the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustines of Zurich said that they had nothing to oppose to the theses of Zwingli.¹³ A few of the country priests offered objections, but of so frivolous a kind that it was felt they did not merit the brief refutation they received. Thus was the mass overthrown.

This unanimity deeply touched the hearts of all. Zwingli attempted to express his joy, but sobs choked his utterance. Many in that assembly wept with him. The grey-headed warrior Hoffmeister,

¹¹Dorner, *Hist. Prof. Theol.*, vol. 1, p. 309.

¹²Christoffel, p. 137.

¹³Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 184.

turning to the council, said, “Ye, my lords of Zurich, ought to take up the Word of God boldly; God the Almighty will prosper you therein.” These simple words of the veteran soldier, whose voice had so often been heard rising high above the storm of battle, made a deep impression upon the assembly. ¹⁴

No sooner had Zwingle won this victory than he found that he must defend it from the violence of those who would have thrown it away. He might have obtained from the council an order for the instant removal of the images, and the instant suppression of the mass, but with his characteristic caution he feared precipitation. He suggested that both should be suffered to continue a short while longer, that time might be given him more fully to prepare the public mind for the change. Meanwhile, the council ordered that the images should be “covered and veiled,” and that the Supper should be dispensed in bread and wine to those who wished it in that form. It was also enacted that public processions of religious bodies should be discontinued, that the Host should not be carried through the streets and highways, and that the relics and bones of saints should be decently buried. ¹⁵

¹⁴Gerdesius, tom. 1, pp. 291, 292. Christoffel, pp. 137-139.

¹⁵Ibid., tom. 1, pp. 292, 293. Christoffel, pp. 142, 143. They boasted having in the cathedral the bodies of St. Felix and St. Regulus, martyrs of the Theban legion. When their coffins were opened they were found to contain some bones mixed with pieces of charcoal and brick. The bones were committed to the earth. “Nevertheless,” says Ruchat, “the Papists in latter times have given out that the bodies of the martyrs were carried to Ursern, in the canton of Uri, since the Reformation, and they were exhibited there on the 11th April, 1688.” (Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 193.)

Chapter 15: Establishment of Protestantism in Zurich

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The Greater Reforms—Purification of the Churches—Threatening Message of the Forest Cantons—Zurich’s Reply—Abduction of the Pastor of Burg—The Wirths—Their Condemnation and Execution—Zwingle Demands the Non-celebration of the Mass—Am-Gruet Opposes—Zwingle’s Argument—Council’s Edict—A Dream—The Passover- First Celebration of the Supper in Zurich—Its Happy Influence—Social and Moral Regulations—Two Annual Synods—Prosperity of Zurich

Picture: View of Lake Zug

Picture: Celebration of the Lords Supper in the Protestant Form by the Zurichers

At last the hour arrived to carry out the greater reforms. On the 20th of June, 1524, a procession composed of twelve councillors, the three city pastors, the city architect, smiths, lock-smiths, joiners, and masons might have been seen traversing the streets of Zurich, and visiting its several churches. On entering, they locked the door from the inside, took down the crosses, removed the images, defaced the frescoes, and re-stained the walls. “The reformed,” says Bullinger, “were glad, accounting this proceeding an act of worship done to the true God.” But the superstitious, the same chronicler tells us, witnessed the act with tears, deeming it a fearful impiety. “Some of these people,” says Christoffel, “hoped that the images would of their own accord return to their vacant places, and astound the iconoclasts by this proof of their miraculous power.”¹ As the images, instead of remounting to their niches, lay broken and shivered, they lost credit with their votaries, and so many were cured of their superstition. The affair passed off without the least disturbance. In all the country

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¹Christoffel, p. 143. See also footnote.

burned, and the costly ornaments and rich robes that adorned the idols were sold, and the proceeds devoted to the support of the poor, “those images of Christ.”²

The act was not without significance; nay, rather, rightly considered, it was among the more important reformations that had been hitherto brought to pass in the canton. It denoted the emancipation of the people from the bonds of a degrading superstition. Men and women breathed the “ampler ether and the diviner air” of the Reformed doctrine, which condemned, in unmistakable language, the use of graven images for any purpose whatever. The voice of Scripture was plain on the subject, and the Protestants of Zurich now that the scales had fallen from their eyes-saw that they were to worship God, and Him only, in spirit and in truth, in obedience to the commandments of the Almighty, and in accordance with the teaching of Jesus Christ.

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Again there came a pause. The movement rested a little while at the point it had reached. The interval was filled up with portentous events. The Diet of the Swiss Confederation, which met that year at Zug, sent a deputation to Zurich to say that they were resolved to crush the new doctrine by force of arms, and that they would hold all who should persist in these innovations answerable with their goods, their liberties, and their lives. Zurich bravely replied that in the matter of religion they must follow the Word of God alone.³ When this answer was carried back to the Diet the members trembled with rage. The fanaticism of the cantons of Lucerne, Schwitz, Uri, Unterwalden, Friburg, and Zug was rising from one day to another, and soon blood would be spilt.

One night Jean Oexlin, the pastor of Burg, near Stein on the Rhine, was dragged from his bed and carried away to prison. The signal-gun was fired, the alarm-bells were rung in the valley, and the parishioners rose in mass to rescue their beloved pastor.⁴ Some miscreants mixed in the crowd, rioting ensued, and the Carthusian convent of Ittingen was burned to the ground. Among those who had been attracted by the noise of the tumult, and who had followed the

²Sleidan, bk. 4, p. 73. Zwing. Op., tom. 1, fol. 261. Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 294, also p. 305. Christoffel, pp. 143, 144.

³Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 217.

⁴ibid p. 218.

crowd which sought to rescue the pastor of Burg, carried away by the officers of a bailiff whose jurisdiction did not extend to the village in which he lived, were an old man named Wirth, Deputy-Bailiff of Stammheim, and his two sons, Adrian and John, preachers of the Gospel, and distinguished by the zeal and courage with which they had prosecuted that good work. They had for some time been objects of dislike for their Reformed sentiments. Apprehended by the orders of the Diet, they were charged with the outrage which they had striven to the utmost of their power to prevent. Their real offense was adherence to the Reformed faith. They were taken to Baden, put to the torture, and condemned to death by the Diet. The younger son was spared, but the father and the elder son, along with Burkhard Ruetimann, Deputy-Bailiff of Nussbaumen, were ordered for execution.

While on their way to the place where they were to die, the Cure of Baden addressed them, bidding them fall on their knees before the image in front of a chapel they were at the moment passing. "Why should I pray to wood and stone?" said the younger Wirth; "my God is the living God, to Him only will I pray. Be you yourself converted to Him, for you have not worn the grey frock longer than I did; and you too must die." It so happened that the priest died within the year.⁵ Turning to his father, the younger Wirth said, "My dear father, from this moment you shall no longer be my father, and I shall no longer be your son; but we shall be brothers in Jesus Christ, for the love of Whom we are now to lay down our lives. We shall today go to Him who is our Father, and the Father of all believers, and with Him we shall enjoy an everlasting life." Being come to the place of execution, they mounted the scaffold with firm step, and bidding each other farewell till they should again meet in the eternal mansions, they bared their necks, and the executioner struck. The spectators could not refrain from shedding floods of tears when they saw their heads rolling on the scaffold.⁶

Zwingle was saddened but not intimidated by these events. He saw in them no reason why he should stop, but on the contrary a strong reason why he should advance in the movement of Reforma-

⁵Ibid., p. 221.

⁶Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 221. Sleidan, bk. 4, p. 77. Christoffel, pp. 214-221.

tion. Rome shall pay dear for the blood she has spilt; so Zwingli resolves; he will abolish the mass, and complete the Reformation of Zurich.

On the 11th of April, 1525, the three pastors of Zurich appeared before the Council of Two Hundred, and demanded that the Senate should enact that at the approaching Easter festival the celebration of the Lord's Supper should take place according to its original institution.⁷ The Under-Secretary of State, Am-Gruet, started up to do battle in behalf of the threatened Sacrament. "This is my body," said he, quoting the words of Christ, which he insisted were a plain and manifest assertion that the bread was the real body of Christ. Zwingli replied that Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture, and reminded him of numerous passages where it has the force of signifies, and among others he quoted the following: - "The seed is the Word," "The field is the world," "I am the Vine," "The Rock was Christ."⁸ The secretary objected that these passages were taken from parables and proved nothing. "No," it was replied, "the phrases occur after the parable has ended, and the figurative language been put aside." Am-Gruet stood alone. The council were already convinced; they ordered that the mass should cease, and that on the following day, Maundy Thursday, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated after the apostolic institution.⁹

[471] The scene in which Zwingli had been so intensely occupied during the day, presented itself to him when asleep. He thought that he was again in the Council Chamber disputing with Am-Gruet. The secretary was urging his objection, and Zwingli was unable to repel it. Suddenly, a figure stood before him and said, "O, slow of heart to understand, why don't you reply to him by quoting [Exodus 12:11](#) - 'Ye shall eat it [the lamb] in haste: it is the Lord's Passover'?"¹⁰ Roused from sleep by the appearance of the figure, he leaped out of bed, turned up the passage in the Septuagint, and found there the same word *ejsti* (is) used with regard to the institution of the Passover which is employed in reference to the institution of the Supper. All are agreed that the lamb was simply the symbol and

⁷Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 318.

⁸Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 245.

⁹Sleidan, bk. 4, p. 82. Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 321. Christoffel. p. 146.

¹⁰Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 246. Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 322.

memorial of the Passover: why should the bread be more in the Supper? The two are but one and the same ordinance under different forms. The following day Zwingle preached from the passage in Exodus, arguing that that exegesis must be at fault which finds two opposite meanings in the same; word, used, as it here is, in the same form of expression, and recording the institution of the same ordinance. If the lamb was simply a symbol in the Passover, the bread can be nothing more in the Supper; but if the bread in the Supper was Christ, the lamb in the Passover was Jehovah. So did Zwingle argue in his sermon, to the conviction of many of his hearers.

In giving an account of the occurrence afterwards, Zwingle playfully remarked that he could not tell whether the figure was white or black.¹¹ His opponents, however, had no difficulty in determining that the figure was black, and that Zwingle received his doctrine from the devil.

On the Thursday of Easter-week the Sacrament of the Supper was for the first time dispensed in Zurich according to the Protestant form. The altar was replaced by a table covered with a white cloth, on which were set wooden plates with unleavened bread, and wooden goblets filled with wine. The pyxes were disused, for, said they, Christ commanded “the elements” not to be enclosed but distributed. The altars, mostly of marble, were converted into pulpits, from which the Gospel was preached. The service began with a sermon; after sermon, the pastor and deacons took their place behind the table; the words of institution ([1 Corinthians 11:20-29](#)) were read; prayers were offered, a hymn was sung in responses, a short address was delivered; the bread and wine were then carried round, and the communicants partook of them kneeling on their footstools.¹²

“This celebration of the Lord’s Supper,” says Christoffel, “was accompanied with blessed results. An altogether new love to God and the brethren sprang up, and the words of Christ received spirit and life. The different orders of the Roman Church unceasingly quarrelled with each other; the brotherly love of the first centuries of Christianity returned to the Church with the Gospel. Enemies

¹¹“Ater an albus, nihil memini, somnium enim narro.” (Gerdesius, tom. 1, p. 322.)

¹²Ruchat, tom. 1, p. 247. Christoffel, p. 149.

renounced old deep-rooted hatred, and embraced in an ecstasy of love and a sense of common brotherhood, by the partaking in common of the hallowed bread. ‘Peace has her habitation in our town,’ wrote Zwingle to Ecolampadius; ‘no quarrel, no hypocrisy, no envy, no strife. Whence can such union come but from the Lord, and our doctrine, which fills us with the fruits of peace and piety?’”¹³

This ecclesiastical Reformation brought a social one in its wake. Protestantism was a breath of healing—a stream of cleansing in all countries to which it came. By planting a renovating principle in the individual heart, Zwingle had planted a principle of renovation at the heart of the community; but he took care to nourish and conserve that principle by outward arrangements. Mainly through his influence with the Great Council, aided by the moral influence the Gospel exercised over its members, a set of regulations and laws was framed, calculated to repress immorality and promote virtue in the canton. The Sunday and marriage, those twin pillars of Christian morality, Zwingle restored to their original dignity. Rome had made the Sunday simply a Church festival: Zwingle replaced it on its first basis—the Divine enactment; work was forbidden upon it, although allowed, specially in harvest-time, in certain great exigencies of which the whole Christian community were to judge. Marriage, which Rome had desecrated by her doctrine of “holy celibacy,” and by making it a Sacrament, in order, it was pretended, to cleanse it, Zwingle revindicated by placing it upon its original institution as an ordinance of God, and in itself holy and good. All questions touching marriage he made subject to a small special tribunal. The confessional was abolished. “Disclose your malady,” said the Reformer, “to the Physician who alone can heal it.” Most of the holy-days were abrogated. All, of whatever rank, were to attend church, at least once, on Sunday. Gambling, profane swearing, and all excess in eating and drinking were prohibited under penalties. To support this arrangement the small inns were suppressed, and drink was not allowed to be sold after nine o’clock in the evening. Grosser immoralities and sins were visited with excommunication, which was pronounced by a board of moral control, composed of the marriage-judges, the magistrates of the district, and the pastors—a commingling

¹³Christoffel, pp. 147,148.

of civil and ecclesiastical authority not wholly in harmony with the theoretic views of the Reformer, but he deemed that the peculiar relations of the Church to the State made this arrangement necessary and justifiable for the time.

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Above all he was anxious to guard the morals of the pastors, as a means of preserving untarnished the grandeur and unimpaired the power of the Word preached, knowing that it is in the Church usually that the leprosy of national declension first breaks out. An act of council, passed in 1528, appointed two synodal assemblies to be held each year—one in spring, the other in autumn. All the pastors were to convene, each with one or two members of his congregation. On the part of the council the synod was attended by the burgomaster, six councillors, and the town clerk. The court mainly occupied itself with inquiries into the lives, the doctrine, and the occupations of the individual pastors, with the state of morals in their several parishes.

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Thus a vigorous discipline was exercised over all classes, lay and cleric. This regime would never have been submitted to, had not the Gospel as a great spiritual pioneer gone before. Its beneficent results were speedily apparent. “Under its protecting and sheltering influence,” says Christoffel, “there grew up and flourished those manly and hardy virtues which so richly adorned the Church of the Reformation at its commencement.” An era of prosperity and renown now opened on Zurich. Order and quiet were established, the youth were instructed, letters were cultivated, arts and industry flourished, and the population, knit together in the bonds of a holy faith, dwelt in peace and love. They were exempt from the terrible scourge which so frequently desolated the Popish cantons around them. Zwingle had withdrawn them from the “foreign service,” so demoralising to their patriotism and their morality, and while the other cantons were shedding their blood on foreign fields, the inhabitants of the canton of Zurich were prosecuting the labours of peace, enriching their territory with their activity and skill, and making its capital, Zurich, one of the lights of Christendom.

¹⁴Christoffel, pp. 151,165.

**Book 9: History of Protestantism from the
Diet of Worms, 1521, to the Augsburg
Confession, 1530**

Chapter 1: The German New Testament

Man Silenced—God about to Speak—Political Complications—Truth in the Midst of Tempests—Luther in the Wartburg—Lessons taught him—Soliman—Relation of the Turk to the Reformation—Leo X. Dies—Adrian of Utrecht—What the Romans think of their New Pope—Adrian’s Reforms—Luther’s Idleness—Commences the Translation of the New Testament—Beauty of the Translation—A Second Revelation—Phantoms

Picture: Henry VIII.

Picture: View in Thuringia: the Wartburg in the Distance

The history of the Reformation in Germany once more claims our consideration. The great movement of the human soul from bondage, which so grandly characterised the sixteenth century, we have already traced in its triumphant march from the cell of the Augustine monk to the foot of the throne of Charles V., from the door of the Schlosskirk at Wittenberg to the gorgeous hall of Worms, crowded with the powers and principalities of Western Europe.

The moment is one of intensest interest, for it has landed us, we feel, on the threshold of a new development of the grand drama. On both sides a position has been taken up from which there is no retreat; and a collision, in which one or other of the parties must perish, now appears inevitable. The new forces of light and liberty, speaking through the mouth of their chosen champion, have said, “Here we stand, we cannot go back.” The old forces of superstition and despotism, interpreting themselves through their representatives, the Pope and the emperor, have said with equal emphasis, “You shall not advance.”

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of the terrible blows, as they echo and re-echo over the field on which the champions close in deadly strife. But instead of the shock of battle, suddenly a deep stillness descends upon the scene, and the combatants on both sides stand motionless. He who looketh on the sun and it shineth not has issued His command to suspend the conflict. As of old "the cloud" has removed and come between the two hosts, so that they come not near the one to the other.

But why this pause? If the battle had been joined that moment, the victory, according to every reckoning of human probabilities, would have remained with the old powers. The adherents of the new were not yet ready to go forth to war. They were as yet immensely inferior in numbers. Their main unfitness, however, did not lie there, but in this, that they lacked their weapons. The arms of the other were always ready. They leaned upon the sword, which they had already unsheathed. The weapon of the other was knowledge—the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That sword had to be prepared for them: the Bible had to be translated; and when finally equipped with this armor, then would the soldiers of the Reformation go forth to battle, prepared to withstand all the hardships of the campaign, and finally to come victorious out of the "great fight of afflictions" which they were to be called, though not just yet, to wage.

If, then, the great voice which had spoken in Germany, and to which kings, electoral princes, dukes, prelates, cities and universities, had listened, and the mighty echoes of which had come back from far-distant lands, was now silent, it was that a Greater voice might be heard. Men must be prepared for that voice. All meaner sounds must be hushed. Man had spoken, but in this silence God Himself was to speak to men, directly from His own Word.

Let us first cast a glance around on the political world. It was the age of great monarchs. Master of Spain, and of many other realms in both the Eastern and the Western world, and now also possessor of the imperial diadem, was the taciturn, ambitious, plodding, and politic Charles V. Francis I., the most polished, chivalrous, and war-like knight of his time, governed France. The self-willed, strong-minded, and cold-hearted Henry

VIII. was swaying the scepter in England, and dealing alternate blows, ashumor and policy moved him, to Rome and to the Reformation. The wise Frederick was exercising kingly power in Saxony,

and by his virtues earning a lasting fame for himself, and laying the foundation of lasting power for his house. The elegant, self-indulgent, and sceptical Leo X. was master of the ceremonies at Rome. Asia owned the scepter of Soliman the Magnificent. Often were his hordes seen hovering, like a cloud charged with lightning, on the frontier of Christendom. When a crisis arose in the affairs of the Refomnation, and the kings obedient to the Roman See had united their swords to strike, and with blow so decisive that they should not need to strike a second time, the Turk, obeying One Whom he knew not, would straightway present himself on the eastern limits of Europe, and in so menacing an attitude, that the swords unsheathed against the poor Protestants had to be turned in another quarter. The Turk was the lightning-rod that drew off the tempest. Thus did Christ cover His little flock with the shield of the Moslem.

The material resources at the command of these potentates were immense. They were the lords of the nations and the leaders of the armies of Christendom. It was in the midst of these ambitions and policies, that it seemed good to the Great Disposer that the tender plant of Protestantism should grow up. One wonders that in such a position it was able to exist a single day. The Truth took root and flourished, so to speak, in the midst of a hurricane. How was this? Where had it defense? The very passions that warred like great tempests around it, became its defense. Its foes were made to check and counter-check each other. Their furious blows fell not upon the truths at which they were aimed, and which they were meant to extirpate; they fell upon themselves. Army was dashed against army; monarch fell before monarch; one terrible tempest from this quarter met another terrible tempest from the opposite quarter, and thus the intrigues and assaults of kings and statesmen became a bulwark around the principle which it was the object of these mighty ones to undermine and destroy. Now it is the arm of her great persecutor, Charles V., that is raised to defend the Church, and now it is beneath the shadow of Soliman the Turk that she finds asylum. How visible the hand of God! How marvellous His providence!

Luther never wore sword in his life, except when he figured as Knight George in the Wartburg, and yet he never lacked sword to defend him when he was in danger. He was dismissed from the Diet at Worms with two powerful weapons unsheathed above his

head - the excommunication of the Pope and the ban of the emperor. One is enough surely; with both swords bared against him, how is it possible that he can escape destruction? Yet amid the hosts of his enemies, when they are pressing round him on every side, and are ready to swallow him up, he suddenly becomes invisible; he passes through the midst of them, and enters unseen the doors of his hiding-place.

This was Luther's second imprisonment. It was a not less essential part of his training for his great work than was his first. In his cell at Erfurt he had discovered the foundation on which, as a sinner, he must rest. In his prison of the Wartburg he is shown the one foundation on which the Church must be reared-the Bible. Other lessons was Luther here taught. The work appointed him demanded a nature strong, impetuous, and fearless; and such was the temperament with which he had been endowed. His besetting sin was to under-estimate difficulties, and to rush on, and seize the end before it was matured. How different from the prudent, patient, and circumspect Zwingli! The Reformer of Zurich never moved a step till he had prepared his way by instructing the people, and carrying their understandings and sympathies with him in the changes he proposed for their adoption. The Reformer of Wittemberg, on the other hand, in his eagerness to advance, would not only defy the strong, he at times trampled upon the weak, from lack of sympathy and considerateness for their infirmities. He assumed that others would see the point as clearly as he himself saw it. The astonishing success that had attended him so far - the Pope defied, the emperor vanquished, and nations rallying to him-was developing these strong characteristics to the neglect of those gentler, but more efficacious qualities, without which enduring success in a work like that in which he was engaged is unattainable. The servant of the Lord must not strive. His speech must distil as the dew. It was light that the world needed. This enforced pause was more profitable to the Reformer, and more profitable to the movement, than the busiest and most successful year of labor which even the great powers of Luther could have achieved. He was now led to examine his own heart, and distinguish between what had been the working of passion, and what the working of the Spirit of God. Above all he was led to the Bible. His theological knowledge was thus extended and ripened. His nature was sanctified and enriched,

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and if his impetuosity was abated, his real strength was in the same proportion increased. The study of the Word of God revealed to him likewise, what he was apt in his conflicts to overlook, that there was an edifice to be built up as well as one to be pulled down, and that this was the nobler work of the two.

The sword of the emperor was not the only peril from which the Wartburg shielded Luther. His triumph at Worms had placed him on a pinnacle where he stood in the sight of all Christendom. He was in danger of becoming giddy and falling into an abyss, and dragging down with him the cause he represented. Therefore was he suddenly withdrawn into a deep silence, where the plaudits with which the word was ringing could not reach him; where he was alone with God; and where he could not but feel his insignificance in the presence of the Eternal Majesty.

While Luther retires from view in the Wartburg, let us consider what is passing in the world. All its movements revolve around the one great central movement, which is Protestantism. The moment Luther entered within the gates of the Wartburg the political sky became overcast, and dark clouds rolled up in every quarter. First Soliman, "whom thirteen battles had rendered the terror of Germany,"¹ made a sudden eruption into Europe. He gained many towns and castles, and took Belgrad, the bulwark of Hungary, situated at the confluence of the Danube and the Save. The States of the Empire, stricken with fear, hastily assembled at Nuremberg to concert measures for the defense of Christendom, and for the arresting of the victorious march of its terrible invader.² This was work enough for the princes. The execution of the emperor's edict against Luther, with which they had been charged, must lie over till they had found means of compelling Soliman and his hordes to return to their own land. Their swords were about to be unsheathed above Luther's head, when lo, some hundred thousand Turkish scimitars are unsheathed above theirs!

While this danger threatened in the East, another suddenly appeared in the South. News came from Spain that seditions had broken out in that country in the emperor's absence; and Charles

¹Muller, vol. 3, p. 55.

²Sleidan, p. 51.

V., leaving Luther for the time in peace, was compelled to hurry home by sea in order to compose the dissensions that distracted his hereditary dominions. He left Germany not a little disgusted at finding its princes so little obsequious to his will, and so much disposed to fetter him in the exercise of his imperial prerogative.

Matters were still more embroiled by the war that next broke out between Charles and Francis I. The opening scenes of the conflict lay in the Pyrenees, but the campaign soon passed into Italy, and the Pope joining his arms with those of the emperor, the French lost the Duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Milan, which they had held for six years, and the misfortune was crowned by their being driven out of Lombardy. And now came sorrow to the Pope! Great was the joy of Leo X. at the expulsion of the French. His arms had triumphed, and Parma and Piacenza had been restored to the ecclesiastical State.³ He received the tidings of this good fortune at his country seat of Malliana. Coming as they did on the back of the emperor's edict proscribing Luther, they threw him into an ecstasy of delight. The clouds that had lowered upon his house appeared to be dispersing. "He paced backwards and forwards, between the window and a blazing hearth, till deep into the night-it was the month of November."⁴ He watched the public rejoicings in honour of the victory. He hurried off to Rome, and reached it before the fetes there in course of celebration had ended. Scarce had he crossed the threshold of his palace when he was seized with illness. He felt that the hand of death was upon him. Turning to his attendants he said, "Pray for me, that I may yet make you all happy." The malady ran its course so rapidly that he died without the Sacrament. The hour of victory was suddenly changed into the hour of death, and the feux-de-joie were succeeded by funeral bells and mourning plumes. Leo had reigned with magnificence-he died deeply in debt, and was buried amid manifest contempt. The Romans, says Ranke, never forgave him "for dying without the Sacraments. They pursued his corpse to its grove with insult and reproach. 'Thou hast crept in like

³Robertson, *Hist. of Charles V.*, vol. 1, p. 115; Edin., 1829.

⁴Ranke, *Hist. of Popes*, vol. 1, p. 66; Bohn's ed., 1847.

a fox,' they exclaimed, 'like a lion hast thou ruled us, and like a dog hast thou died.'" ⁵

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The nephew of the deceased Pope, Cardinal Giulio de Medici, aspired to succeed his uncle. But a more powerful house than that of Medici now claimed to dispose of the tiara. The monarchs of Spain were more potent factors in European affairs than the rich merchant of Florence. The conclave had lasted long, and Giulio de Medici, despairing of his own election, made a virtue of necessity, and proposed that the Cardinal of Tortosa, who had been Charles's tutor, should be elevated to the Pontificate. The person named was unknown to the cardinals. He was a native of Utrecht. ⁶ He was entirely without ambition, aged, austere. Eschewing all show, he occupied himself wholly with his religious duties, and a faint smile was the nearest approach he ever made to mirth. Such was the man whom the cardinals, moved by some sudden and mysterious impulse, or it may be responsive to the touch of the imperial hand, united in raising to the Papal chair. He was in all points the opposite of the magnificent Leo. ⁷

Adrian VI. - for under this title did he reign-was of humble birth, but his talents were good and his conduct was exemplary. He began his public life as professor at Louvain. He next became tutor to the Emperor Charles, by whose influence, joined to his own merits, he was made Cardinal of Tortosa. He was in Spain, on the emperor's business, when the news of his election reached him. The cardinals, who by this time were alarmed at their own deed, hoped the modest man would decline the dazzling post. They were disappointed. Adrian, setting out for Rome with his old housekeeper, took possession of the magnificent apartments which Leo had so suddenly vacated. He gazed with indifference, if not displeasure, upon the ancient masterpieces, the magnificent pictures, and glowing statuary, with which the exquisite taste and boundless prodigality of

⁵Ibid., vol. 1, p. 67. "He has died like a heretic without confession and without the Sacrament," said the populace. The celebrated Italian poet, Sannazaro, made the following distich upon the occurrence: - "Sacra, sub extrema, si forte requiris, hora, Cur Leo non potuit sumere? Vendiderat." (Are you curious to know why Pope Leo could not receive the Sacrament in his last hour? The reason is, he had sold it.)

⁶Pallavicino, tom. 1, lib. 2, cap. 2, p. 123.

⁷Sleidan, p. 56. Ranke, vol. 1, pp. 68, 69.

Leo had enriched the Vatican. The “Laocoon” was already there; but Adrian turned away from that wonderful group, which some have pronounced the chef-d’oeuvre of the chisel, with the cold remark, “They are the idols of the heathen.” Of all the curious things in the vast museum of the Papal Palace, Adrian VI. was esteemed the most curious by the Romans. They knew not what to make of the new master the cardinals had given them. His coming (August, 1522) was like the descent of a cloud upon Rome; it was like an eclipse at noonday. There came a sudden collapse in the gaities and spectacles of the Eternal City. For songs and masquerades, there were prayers and beads. “He will be the ruin of us,” said the Romans of their new Pope.⁸

The humble, pious, sincere Adrian aspired to restore, not to overthrow the Papacy. His predecessor had thought to extinguish Luther’s movement by the sword; the Hollander judged that he had found a better way. He proposed to suppress one Reformation by originating another. He began with a startling confession: “It is certain that the Pope may err in matters of faith in defending heresy by his opinions or decretals.”⁹ This admission, meant to be the starting-point of a moderate reform, is perhaps even more inconvenient at this day than when first made. The world long afterwards received the “Encyclical and Syllabus” of Pius IX., and the “Infallibility Decree” of July 18, 1870, which teach the exactly opposite doctrine, that the Pope cannot err in matters of faith and morals. If Adrian spoke true, it follows that the Pope may err; if he spoke false, it equally follows that the Pope may err; and what then are we to make of the decree of the Vatican Council of 1870, which, looking backwards as well as forwards, declares that error is impossible on the part of the Pope?

Adrian wished to reform the Court of Rome as well as the system of the Papacy.¹⁰ He set about purging the city of certain notorious classes, expelling the vices and filling it with the virtues. Alas! he soon found that he would leave few in Rome save himself. His

⁸Pallavicino, tom. 1, lib. 2, cap. 3, p. 126. Ranke, vol. 1, p. 70. D’Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 122.

⁹Comm. in lib. iv., Sententiarum Quest. de Sacr. Confirm.; Romae, 1522; apud D’Aubigne, bk. 10, chap. 2.

¹⁰Pallavicino, tom. 1, cap. 4. Platina, Vit. Ad. 6. No. 222, Som. Pont.

reforms of the system fared just as badly, as the sequel will show us. If he touched an abuse, all who were interested in its maintenance—and they were legion—rose in arms to defend it. If he sought to loosen but one stone, the whole edifice began to totter. Whether these reforms would save Germany was extremely problematical: one thing was certain, they would lose Italy. Adrian, sighing over the impossibilities that surrounded him on every side, had to confess that this middle path was impracticable, and that his only choice lay between Luther's Reform on the one hand, and Charles V.'s policy on the other. He cast himself into the arms of Charles.

[478] Our attention must again be directed to the Wartburg. While the Turk is thundering on the eastern border of Christendom, and Charles and Francis are fighting with one another in Italy, and Adrian is attempting impossible reforms at Rome, Luther is steadily working in his solitude. Seated on the ramparts of his castle, looking back on the storm from which he had just escaped, and feasting his eyes on the quiet forest glades and well-cultivated valleys spread out beneath him, his first days were passed in a delicious calm. By-and-by he grew ill in body and troubled in mind, the result most probably of the sudden transition from intense excitement to profound inaction. He bitterly accused himself of idleness. Let us see what it was that Luther denominated idleness. "I have published," he writes on the 1st of November, "a little volume against that of Catharinus on Antichrist, a treatise in German on confession, a commentary in German on the 67th Psalm, and a consolation to the Church of Wittemberg. Moreover, I have in the press a commentary in German on the Epistles and Gospels for the year; I have just sent off a public reprimand to the Bishop of Mainz on the idol of Indulgences he has raised up again at Halle; ¹¹ and I have finished a commentary on the Gospel story of the Ten Lepers. All these writings are in German." ¹² This was the indolence in which he lived. From the region of the air, from the region of the birds, from the mountain, from the Isle of Patmos, from which he dated his letters, the Reformer saw all that

¹¹The Archbishop of Mainz had resumed the sale of indulgences. The money raised was to be devoted to combatting the Mussulman hordes. Luther, from the Wartburg, sent a severe letter to the archbishop, to which he returned a meek reply, promising amendment touching the matter which had drawn upon him Luther's reprimand.

¹²Michelet, *Life of Luth.*, pp. 103, 104; Lond., 1846.

was passing in the world beneath him. He scattered from his mountain-top, far and wide over the Fatherland, epistles, commentaries, and treatises, counsels and rebukes. It is a proof how alive he had become to the necessities of the times, that almost all his books in the Wartburg were written in German.

But a greater work than all these did Luther by-and-by set himself to do in his seclusion. There was one Book—the Book of books—specially needed at that particular stage of the movement, and that Book Luther wished his countrymen to possess in their mother tongue. He set about translating the New Testament from the original Greek into German; and despite his other vast labours, he prosecuted with almost superhuman energy this task, and finished it before he left the Wartburg. Attempts had been made in 1477, in 1490, and in 1518 to translate the Holy Bible from the Vulgate; but the rendering was so obscure, the printing so wretched, and the price so high, that few cared to procure these versions. ¹³ Amid the harassments of Wittemberg, Luther could not have executed this work; here he was able to do it. He had intended translating also the Old Testament from the original Hebrew, but the task was beyond his strength; he waited till he should be able to command learned assistance; and thankful he was that the same day that opened to him the gates of the Wartburg, found his translation of the New Testament completed.

But the work required revision, and after Luther's return to Wittemberg he went through it all, verse by verse, with Melanchthon. By September 21, 1522, the whole of the New Testament in German was in print, and could be purchased at the moderate sum of a florin and a half. The more arduous task, of translating the Old Testament, was now entered upon. No source of information was neglected in order to produce as perfect a rendering as possible, but some years passed away before an entire edition of the Sacred Volume in German was forthcoming. Luther's labours in connection with the Scriptures did not end here. To correct and improve his version was his continual care and study till his life's end. For this he organised a synod or Sanhedrim of learned men, consisting of

¹³These versions were published, says Seckendorf, at Nuremberg, in the years stated in the text, but they were wholly useless, for not only was the typography of the versions execrable, but the people were not permitted to read them. (Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 51, p. 204.)

John Bugenhagen, Justus Jonas, Melanchthon, Cruciger, Aurogalus, and George Rover, with any scholar who might chance to visit Wittenberg. ¹⁴ This body met once every week before supper in the Augustine convent, and exchanged suggestions and decided on the emendations to be adopted. When the true meaning of the original had been elicited, the task of clothing it in German devolved on Luther alone.

The most competent judges have pronounced the highest eulogisms on Luther's version. It was executed in a style of exquisite purity, vigor, and beauty. It fixed the standard of the language. In this translation the German tongue reached its perfection as it were by a bound. But this was the least of the benefits Luther's New Testament in German conferred upon his nation. Like another Moses, Luther was taken up into this Mount, that he might receive the Law, and give it to his people. Luther's captivity was the liberation of Germany. Its nations were sitting in darkness when this new day broke upon them from this mountain-top. For what would the Reformation have been without the Bible?-a meteor which would have shone for one moment, and the next gone out in darkness. ¹⁵

"From the innumerable testimonies to the beauty of Luther's translation of the Bible," says Seckendorf, "I select but one, that of Prince George of Anhalt, given in a public assembly of this nation. 'What words,' said the prince, 'can adequately set forth the immense blessing we enjoy in the whole Bible translated by Dr. Martin Luther from the original tongues? So pure, beautiful, and clear is it, by the special grace and assistance of the Holy Spirit, both in its words and its sense, that it is as if David and the other holy prophets had lived in our own country, and spoken in the German tongue. Were Jerome and Augustine alive at this day, they would hail with joy this translation, and acknowledge that no other tongue could boast so faithful and perspicuous a version of the Word of God. We acknowledge the kindness of God in giving us the Greek version of the Septuagint, and also the Latin Bible of Jerome. But how many defects and obscurities are there in the Vulgate! Augustine, too, being ignorant of the Hebrew, has fallen into not a few mistakes.

¹⁴Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 51, p. 204.

¹⁵Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 51, p. 203.

But from the version of Martin Luther many learned doctors have acknowledged that they had understood better the true sense of the Bible than from all the commentaries which others have written upon it.’”¹⁶

These manifold labours, prosecuted without intermission in the solitude of the Castle of the Wartburg, brought on a complete derangement of the bodily functions, and that derangement in turn engendered mental hallucinations. Weakened in body, feverishly excited in mind, Luther was oppressed by fears and gloomy terrors. These his dramatic idiosyncrasy shaped into Satanic forms. Dreadful noises in his chamber at night would awake him from sleep. Howlings as of a dog would be heard at his door, and on one occasion as he sat translating the New Testament, an apparition of the Evil One, in the form of a lion, seemed to be walking round and round him, and preparing to spring upon him. A disordered system had called up the terrible phantasm; yet to Luther it was no phantasm, but a reality. Seizing the weapon that came first to his hand, which happened to be his inkstand,¹⁷ Luther hurled it at the unwelcome intruder with such force, that he put the fiend to flight, and broke the plaster of the wall. We must at least admire his courage.

¹⁶Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 51; Additio.

¹⁷The cicerone of the Wartburg was careful to draw the author's attention, as he does that of every visitor, to the indentation in the wall produced, as he affirms, by Luther's inkstand. The plaster, over against the spot where Luther must have sat, is broken and blackened as if by the sharp blow of some body of moderate weight.

Chapter 2: The Abolition of the Mass

Friar Zwilling—Preaches against the Mass—Attacks the Monastic Orders—Bodenstein of Carlstadt—Dispenses the Supper—Fall of the Mass at Wittemberg—Other Changes—The Zwickau Prophets—Nicholas Stork—Thomas Munzer—Infant Baptism Denounced—The New Gospel—Disorders at Wittemberg—Rumors wafted to the Wartburg—Uneasiness of Luther—He Leaves the Wartburg—Appears at Wittemberg—His Sermon—A Week of Preaching—A Great Crisis—It is Safely Passed

Picture: View of Luthers Room in the Wartburg, showing the Ink-stain on the Wall

Picture: John Bugenhagen (Pomeranus)

The master-spirit was withdrawn, but the work did not stop. Events of great importance took place at Wittemberg during Luther's ten months' sojourn in the Wartburg. The Reformation was making rapid advances. The new doctrine was finding outward expression in a new and simpler worship. ¹

[480] Gabriel Zwilling, an Augustine friar, put his humble hand to the work which the great monk had begun. He began to preach against the mass in the convent church the same in which Luther's voice had often been heard. The doctrine he proclaimed was substantially the same with that which Zurich was teaching in Switzerland, that the Supper is not a sacrifice, but a memorial. He condemned private masses, the adoration of the elements, and required that the Sacrament should be administered in both kinds. The friar gained converts both within and outside the monastery. The monks were in a state of great excitement. Wittemberg was disturbed. The court of the elector was troubled, and Frederick appointed a deputation consisting of Justus Jonas, Philip Melanchthon, and Nicholas Amsdorf, to visit the Augustine convent and restore peace. The issue was the conversion of the members of the deputation to the opinions of Friar

¹Melan., Vit. Luth., p. 19; Vratislavae, 1819.

Gabriel.² It was no longer obscure monks only who were calling for the abolition of the mass; the same cry was raised by the University, the great school of Saxony. Many who had listened calmly to Luther so long as his teaching remained simply a doctrine, stood aghast when they saw the practical shape it was about to take. They saw that it would change the world of a thousand years past, that it would sweep away all the ancient usages, and establish an order of things which neither they nor their fathers had known. They feared as they entered into this new world. [481]

The friar, emboldened by the success that attended his first efforts, attacked next the monastic order itself. He denounced the “vow” as without warrant in the Bible, and the “cloak” as covering only idleness and lewdness. “No one,” said he, “can be saved under a cowl.” Thirteen friars left the convent, and soon the prior was the only person within its walls. Laying aside their habit, the emancipated monks betook them, some to handicrafts, and others to study, in the hope of serving the cause of Protestantism. The ferment at Wittenberg was renewed. At this time it was that Luther’s treatise on “Monastic Vows” appeared. He expressed himself in it with some doubtfulness, but the practical conclusion was that all might be at liberty to quit the convent, but that no one should be obliged to do so.

At this point, Andrew Bodenstein of Carlstadt, commonly called Carlstadt, Archdeacon of Wittenberg, came forward to take a prominent part in these discussions. Carlstadt was bold, zealous, honest, but not without a touch of vanity. So long as Luther was present on the scene, his colossal figure dwarfed that of the archdeacon; but the greater light being withdrawn for the time, the lesser luminary aspired to mount into its place. The “little sallow tawny man” who excelled neither in breadth of judgment, nor in clearness of ideas, nor in force of eloquence, might be seen daily haranguing the people, on theological subjects, in an inflated and mysterious language, which, being not easily comprehensible, was thought by many to envelope a rare wisdom. His efforts in the main were in the right direction. He objected to clerical and monastic celibacy, he openly declared [482]

²Seckendorf, lib. 1, p. 214; Add. 1, 216. Sleidan, 3, 49.

against private masses, against the celebration of the Sacrament in one kind, and against the adoration of the Host.

Carlstadt took an early opportunity of carrying his views into practice. On Christmas Day, 1521, he dispensed the Sacrament in public in all the simplicity of its Divine institution. He wore neither cope nor chasuble. With the dresses he discarded also the genuflections, the crossings, kissings, and other attitudinisings of Rome; and inviting all who professed to hunger and thirst for the grace of God, to come and partake, he gave the bread and the wine to the communicants, saying, "This is the body and blood of our Lord." He repeated the act on New Year's Day, 1522, and continued ever afterwards to dispense the Supper with the same simplicity.³ Popular opinion was on his side, and in January, the Town Council, in concurrence with the University, issued their order, that henceforward the Supper should be dispensed in accordance with the primitive model. The mass had fallen.

With the mass fell many things which grew out of it, or leaned upon it. No little glory and power departed from the priesthood. The Church festivals were no longer celebrated. In the place of incense and banners, of music and processions, came the simple and sublime worship of the heart. Clerical celibacy was exchanged for virtuous wedlock. Confessions were carried to that Throne from which alone comes pardon. Purgatory was first doubted, then denied, and with its removal much of the bitterness was taken out of death. The saints and the Virgin were discarded, and lo! as when a veil is withdrawn, men found themselves in the presence of the Divine Majesty. The images stood neglected on their pedestals, or were torn down, ground to powder, or cast into the fire. The latter piece of reform was not accomplished without violent tumults.

The echoes of these tumults reverberated in the Wartburg. Luther began to fear that the work of Reformation was being converted into a work of demolition. His maxim was that these practical reforms, however justifiable in themselves, should not outrun the public intelligence; that, to the extent to which they did so, the reform was not real, but fictitious: that the error in the heart must first be dethroned, and then the idol in the sanctuary would be cast

³Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 54; Additio i.

out. On this principle he continued to wear the frock of his order, to say mass, to observe his vow as a celibate, and to do other things the principle of which he had renounced, though the time, he judged, had not arrived for dropping the form. Moderation was a leading characteristic of all the Reformers. Zwingle, as we have already seen, followed the same rule in Switzerland. His naive reply to one who complained of the images in the churches, showed considerable wisdom. "As for myself," said Zwingle, "they don't hurt me, for I am short-sighted." In like manner Luther held that external objects did not hurt faith, provided the heart did not hang upon them. Immensely different, however, is the return to these things after having been emancipated from them. ⁴

At this juncture there appeared at Wittemberg a new set of reformers, who seemed bent on restoring human traditions, and the tyranny of man from a point opposite to that of the Pope. These men are known as the "Zwickau Prophets," from the little town of Zwickau, in which they took their rise. The founder of the new sect was Nicholas Stork, a weaver. Luther had restored the authority of the Bible; this was the corner-stone of his Reformation. Stork sought to displace this cornerstone. "The Bible," said he, "is of no use." And what did he put in the room of it? A new revelation which he pretended had been made to himself. The angel Gabriel, he affirmed, had appeared to him in a vision, and said to him, "Thou shalt sit on my throne." A sweet and easy way, truly, of receiving Divine communications! as Luther could not help observing, when he remembered his own agonies and terrors before coming to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵

Stork was joined by Mark Thomas, another weaver of Zwickau; by Mark Stubner, formerly a student at Wittemberg; and by Thomas Munzer, who was the preacher of the "new Gospel." That Gospel comprehended whatever Stork was pleased to say had been revealed to him by the angel Gabriel. He especially denounced infant baptism as an invention of the devil, and called on all disciples to be re-baptised, hence their name "Anabaptists." The spread of their tenets was followed by tumults in Zwickau. ⁶ The magistrates interfered:

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⁴Sleidan, bk. 3, p. 52. Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 49, p.197.

⁵Michelet, Life of Luth., p. 114.

⁶Seckendorf, lib. 1, sec. 48; Additio, pp. 192, 193.

the new prophets were banished: Munzer went to Prague; Stork, Thomas, and Stubner took the road to Wittemberg.

Stork unfolded gradually the whole of that revelation which he had received from the angel, but which he had deemed it imprudent to divulge all at once. The “new Gospel,” when fully put before men, was found to involve the overthrow of all established authority and order in Church and State; men were to be guided by an inward light, of which the new prophets were the medium. They foretold that in a few years the present order of things would be brought to an end, and the reign of the saints would begin.⁷ Stork was to be the monarch of the new kingdom. Attacking Protestantism from apparently opposite poles, there was nevertheless a point in which the Romanists and the Zwickau fanatics met—namely, the rejection of Divine revelation, and the subjection of the conscience to human reason—the reason of Adrian VI., the son of the Utrecht mechanic, on the one side, and the reason of Nicholas Stork, the Zwickau weaver, on the other.

These men found disciples in Wittemberg. The enthusiasm of Carlstadt was heated still more; many of the youth of the University forsook their studies, deeming them useless in presence of an internal illumination which promised to teach them all they needed to know without the toil of learning. The Elector was dismayed at this new outbreak: Melancthon was staggered, and felt himself powerless to stem the torrent. The enemies of the Reformation were exultant, believing that they were about to witness its speedy disorganization and ruin. Tidings reached the Wartburg of what was going on at Wittemberg. Dismay and grief seized Luther to see his work on the point of being wrecked. He was distracted between his wish to finish his translation of the New Testament, and his desire to return to Wittemberg, and combat on the spot the new-sprung fanaticism. All felt that he alone was equal to the crisis, and many voices were raised for his return. Every line he translated was an additional ray of light, to fall in due time upon the darkness of his countrymen. How could he tear himself from such a task? And yet every hour that elapsed, and found him still in the Wartburg, made the confusion and mischief at Wittemberg worse. At last, to his great joy, he finished

⁷Sleidan, bk., 3, p. 52.

his German version of the New Testament, and on the morning of the 3rd March, 1522, he passed out at the portal of his castle. He might be entering a world that would call for his blood; the ban of the Empire was suspended over him; the horizon was black with storms; nevertheless he must go and drive away the wolves that had entered his fold. He traveled in his knight's incognito—a red mantle, trunk-hose, doublet, feather, and sword—not without adventures by the way. On Friday, the 7th of March, he entered Wittenberg.

The town, the University, the council, were electrified by the news of his arrival. "Luther is come," said the citizens, as with radiant faces they exchanged salutations with one another in the streets. A tremendous load had been lifted off the minds of all. The vessel of the Reformation was drifting upon the rocks; some waited in terror, others in expectation for the crash, when suddenly the pilot appeared and grasped the helm.

At Worms was the crisis of the Reformer: at Wittenberg was the crisis of the Reformation. Is it demolition, confusion, and ruin only which Protestantism can produce? Is it only wild and unruly passions which it knows to let loose? Or can it build up? Is it able to govern minds, to unite hearts, to extinguish destructive principles, and plant in their stead reorganising and renovating influences? This was to be the next test of the Reformation. The disorganization reigning at Wittenberg was a greater danger than the sword of Charles V. The crisis was a serious one.

On the Sunday morning after his arrival, Luther entered the parish church, and presented himself with calm dignity and quiet self-composure in the old pulpit. Only ten short months had elapsed since he last stood there; but what events had been crowded into that short period! The Diet at Worms: the Wartburg: the funeral of a Pope: the eruption of the Turk: the war between France and Spain; and, last and worst of all, this outbreak at Wittenberg, which threatened ruin to that cause which was the one hope of a world menaced by so many dangers.

Intense excitement, yet deep stillness, reigned in the audience. No element of solemnity was absent. The moment was very critical. The Reformation seemed to hang trembling in the balance. The man was the same, yet chastened, and enriched. Since last he stood before them, he had become invested with a greater interest, for his

[484] appearance at Worms had shed a halo not only around himself, but on Germany also: the invisibility in which he had since dwelt, where, though they saw him not, they could hear his voice, had also tended to increase the interest. And now, issuing from his concealment, he stood in person before them, like one of the old prophets who were wont to appear suddenly at critical moments of their nation.

Never had Luther appeared grander, and never was he more truly great. He put a noble restraint upon himself. He who had been as an "iron wall" to the emperor, was tender as a mother to his erring flock. He began by stating, in simple and unpretending style, what he said were the two cardinal doctrines of revelation—the ruin of man, and the redemption in Christ. "He who believes on the Savior," he remarked, "is freed from sin." Thus he returned with them to his first starting-point, salvation by free grace in opposition to salvation by human merit, and in doing so he reminded them of what it was that had emancipated them from the bondage of penances, absolutions, and so many rites enslaving to the conscience, and had brought them into liberty and peace. Coming next to the consideration of the abuse of that liberty into which they were at that moment in some danger of falling, he said faith was not enough, it became them also to have charity. Faith would enable each freely to advance in knowledge, according to the gift of the Spirit and his own capacity; charity would knit them together, and harmonize their individual progress with their corporate unity. He willingly acknowledged the advance they had made in his absence; nay, some of them there were who excelled himself in the knowledge of Divine things; but it was the duty of the strong to bear with the weak. Were there those among them who desired the abolition of the mass, the removal of images, and the instant and entire abrogation of all the old rites? He was with them in principle. He would rejoice if this day there was not one mass in all Christendom, nor an image in any of its churches; and he hoped this state of things would speedily be realised. But there were many who were not able to receive this, who were still edified by these things, and who would be injured by their removal. They must proceed according to order, and have regard to weak brethren. "My friend," said the preacher, addressing himself to the more advanced, "have you been long enough at the breast? It is well. But permit your brother to drink as long as yourself."

He strongly insisted that the “Word” which he had preached to them, and which he was about to give them in its written form in their mother tongue, must be their great leader. By the Word, and not the sword, was the Reformation to be propagated. “Were I to employ force,” he said, “what should I gain? Grimace, formality, apings, human ordinances, and hypocrisy,... but sincerity of heart, faith, charity, not at all. Where these three are wanting, all is wanting, and I would not give a pear-stalk for such a result.”⁸

With the apostle he failed not to remind his hearers that the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but spiritual. The Word must be freely preached; and this Word must be left to work in the heart; and when the heart was won, then the man was won, but not till then. The Word of God had created heaven and earth, and all things, and that Word must be the operating power, and “not we poor sinners.” His own history he held to be an example of the power of the Word. He declared God’s Word, preached and wrote against indulgences and Popery, but never used force; but this Word, while he was sleeping, or drinking his tankard of Wittemberg ale with Philip and Amsdorf, worked with so mighty a power, that the Papacy had been weakened and broken to such a degree as no prince or emperor had ever been able to break it. Yet he had done nothing: the Word had done all.

This series of discourses was continued all the week through. All the institutions and ordinances of the Church of Rome, the preacher passed in review, and applied the same principle to them all. After the consideration of the question of the mass, he went on to discuss the subject of images, of monasticism, of the confessional, of forbidden meats, showing that these things were already abrogated in principle, and all that was needed to abolish them in practice, without tumult, and without offense to any one, was just the diffusion of the doctrine which he preached. Every day the great church was crowded, and many flocked from the surrounding towns and villages to these discourses.

The triumph of the Reformer was complete. He had routed the Zwickau fanatics without even naming them. His wisdom, his moderation, his tenderness of heart, and superiority of intellect

⁸Luth. Opp. (L) 18, 225; apud D’Aubigne 3, 67, 68.

carried the day, and the new prophets appeared in comparison small indeed. Their “revelations” were exploded, and the Word of God was restored to its supremacy. It was a great battle-greater in some respects than that which Luther had fought at Worms. The whole of Christendom was interested in the result. At Worms the vessel of Protestantism was in danger of being dashed upon the Scylla of Papal tyranny: at Wittemberg it was in jeopardy of being engulfed in the Charybdis of fanaticism. Luther had guided it past the rocks in the former instance: in the present he preserved it from being swallowed up in the whirlpool.

Chapter 3: Pope Adrian and his Scheme of Reform

Calm Returns—Labours of Luther—Translation of Old Testament—Melancthon’s Common-places—First Protestant System—Preachers—Books Multiplied—Rapid Diffusion of the Truth—Diet at Nuremberg—Pope Adrian Afraid of the Turk—Still more of Lutheranism—His Exhortation to the Diet—His Reforms put before the Diet—They are Rejected—The Hundred Grievances—Edict of Diet permitting the Gospel to be Preached—Persecution—First Three Martyrs of Lutheran Reformation—Joy of Luther—Death of Pope Adrian

Picture: Door of a Parish Church, Nuremberg

Picture: Balcony of the Armoury, Nuremberg

Picture: Part of the City Walls, Nuremberg

Picture: Wittemberg Student Preaching at Goslar

The storm was quickly succeeded by a calm. All things resumed their wonted course at Wittemberg. The fanatics had shaken the dust from their feet and departed, predicting woe against a place which had forsaken the “revelations” of Nicholas Stork to follow the guidance of the Word of God. The youth resumed their studies, the citizens returned to their occupations; Luther went in and out of his convent, busied with writing, preaching, and lecturing, besides that which came upon him daily, “the care of all the churches.” One main business that occupied him, besides the revision of his German New Testament, and the passing of it through the press, was the translation, now undertaken, of the Old Testament. This was a greater work, and some years passed away before it was finished. When at last, by dint of Herculean labor, it was given to the world, it was found that the idiomatic simplicity and purity of the translation permitted the beauty and splendor of Divine truth to shine through, and its power to be felt. Luther had now the satisfaction of thinking that he had raised an effectual barrier against such fanaticism as that of Zwickau, and had kindled a light which no power on earth would

be able to put out, and which would continue to wax brighter and shine ever wider till it had dispelled the darkness of Christendom.

In 1521 came another work, the *Common-places of Melanchthon*, which, next after the German translation *Of the Bible*, contributed powerfully to the establishment of Protestantism. Scattered through a hundred pamphlets and writings were the doctrines of the Reformation—in other words, the recovered truths of Scripture. Melanchthon set about the task of gathering them together, and presenting them in the form of a system. It was the first attempt of the kind. His genius admirably fitted him for this work. He was more of the theologian than Luther, and the grace of his style lent a charm to his theology, and enabled him to find readers among the literary and philosophical classes. The only systems of divinity the world had seen, since the close of the primitive age, were those which the schoolmen had given to it. These had in them neither light nor life; they were dry and hapless, a wilderness of subtle distinctions and doubtful speculations. The system of Melanchthon, drawn from the Bible, exhibiting with rare clearness and beauty the relationships of truth, contrasted strikingly with the dark labyrinth of scholasticism. The Reformation theology was not a chaos of dogmas, as some had begun to suppose it, but a majestic unity.

In proportion as Protestantism strengthened itself at its center, which was Wittemberg, it was diffused more and more widely throughout Germany, and beyond its limits. The movement was breaking out on all sides, to the terror of Rome, and the discomfiture of her subservient princes. The Augustine convents sent numerous recruits to carry on the war. These had been planted, like Papal barracks, all over Germany, but now Rome's artillery was turned against herself. This was specially the case in Nuremberg, Osnabruck, Ratisbon, Strasburg, Antwerp, and in Hesse and Wurtemberg. The light shone into the convents of the other orders also, and their inmates, laying down their cowls and frocks at the gates of their monasteries, joined their Brethren and became preachers of the truth. Great was the wrath of Rome when she saw her soldiers turning their arms against her. A multitude of priests became obedient to the faith, and preached it to their flocks. In other cases flocks forsook their priests, finding that they continued to inculcate the old superstitions and perform the old ceremonies. A powerful influence was acting

on the minds of men, which carried them onward in the path of the Reformed faith, despite threats and dangers and bitter persecutions. Whole cities renounced the Roman faith and confessed the Gospel. The German Bible and the writings of Luther were read at all hearths and by all classes, while preachers perambulated Germany proclaiming the new doctrines to immense crowds, in the market-place, in burial-grounds, on mountains, and in meadows. At Goslar a Wittemberg student preached in a meadow planted with limetrees, which procured for his hearers the designation of the "Lime-tree Brethren."

The world's winter seemed passing rapidly away. Everywhere the ice was breaking up; the skies were filling with light; and its radiance was refreshing to the eyes and to the souls of men! The German nation, emerging from torpor and ignorance, stood up, quickened with a new life, and endowed with a marvellous power. A wondrous and sudden enlightenment had overspread it. It was astonishing to see how the tastes of the people were refined, their perceptions deepened, and their judgments strengthened. Artisans, soldiers-nay, even women-with the Bible in their hand, would put to flight a whole phalanx of priests and doctors who strove to do battle for Rome, but who knew only to wield the old weapons. The printing-press, like a battering-ram of tremendous force, thundered night and day against the walls of the old fortress. "The impulse which the Reformation gave to popular literature in Germany," says D'Aubigne, "was immense. Whilst 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 seventy-one 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 1523, four hundred and ninety-eight. These publications were nearly all on the Protestant side, and were published at Wittemberg. In the last-named year (1523) only twenty Roman Catholic publications appeared." ¹ It was Protestantism that called the literature of Germany into existence.

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An army of book-hawkers was extemporised. These men seconded the efforts of publishers in the spread of Luther's writings,

¹D'Aubigne, bk. 9, chap. 11.

which, clear and terse, glowing with the fire of enthusiasm, and rich with the gold of truth, brought with them an invigoration of the intellect as well as a renewal of the heart. They were translated into French, English, Italian, and Spanish, and circulated in all these countries. Occupying a middle point between the first and second cradles of the Reformation, the Wittemberg movement covered the space between, touching the Hussites of Bohemia on the one side, and the Lollards of England on the other.

[488] We must now turn our eyes on those political events which were marching alongside of the Protestant movement. The Diet of Regency which the emperor had appointed to administer affairs during his absence in Spain was now sitting at Nuremberg. The main business which had brought it together was the inroads of the Turk. The progress of Soliman's arms was fitted to strike the European nations with terror. Rhodes had been captured; Belgrad had fallen; and the victorious leader threatened to make good his devastating march into the very heart of Hungary. Louis, the king of that country, sent his ambassador to the Diet to entreat help against the Asiatic conqueror. At the Diet appeared, too, Chierigato, the nuncio of the Pope.

Adrian VI., when he cast his eyes on the Tartar hordes on the eastern frontier, was not without fears for Rome and Italy; but he was still more alarmed when he turned to Germany, and contemplated: the appalling spread of Lutheranism.² Accordingly, he instructed his ambassador to demand two things—first, that the Diet should concert measures for stopping the progress of the Sultan of Constantinople; but, whatever they might do in this affair, he emphatically demanded that they should cut short the career of the monk of Wittemberg.

In the brief which, on the 25th of November, 1522, Adrian addressed to the “Estates of the sacred Roman Empire, assembled at Nuremberg,” he urged his latter and more important request, “to cut down this pestilential plant that was spreading its boughs so widely... to remove this gangrened member from the body,” by reminding them that “the omnipotent God had caused the earth to open and swallow up alive the two schismatics, Dathan and Abiram; that Peter, the prince of apostles, had struck Ananias and Sapphira with sudden

²Sleidan, bk. 3, p. 55.

death for lying against God... that their own ancestors had put John Huss and Jerome of Prague to death, who now seemed risen from the dead in Martin Luther.”³

But the Papal nuncio, on entering Germany, found that this document, dictated in the hot air of Italy, did not suit the cooler latitude of Bavaria. As Chierigato passed along the highway on his mule, and raised his two fingers, after the usual manner, to bless the wayfarer, the populace would mimic his action by raising theirs, to show how little they cared either for himself or his benediction. This was very mortifying, but still greater mortifications awaited him. When he arrived at Nuremberg, he found, to his dismay, the pulpits occupied by Protestant preachers, and the cathedrals crowded with most attentive audiences. When he complained of this, and demanded the suppression of the sermons, the Diet replied that Nuremberg was a free city, and that the magistrates mostly were Lutheran. He next intimated his intention of apprehending the preachers by his own authority, in the Pontiff's name; but the Archbishop of Mainz, and others, in consternation at the idea of a popular tumult, warned the nuncio against a project so fraught with danger, and told him that if he attempted such a thing, they would quit the city without a moment's delay, and leave him to deal with the indignant burghers as best he could.

Baffled in these attempts, and not a little mortified that his own office and his master's power should meet with so little reverence in Germany, the nuncio began, but in less arrogant tone, to unfold to the Diet the other instructions of the Pope; and more especially to put before its members the promised reforms which Adrian had projected when elevated to the Popedom. The Popes have often pursued a similar line of conduct when they really meant nothing; but Adrian was sincere. To convince the Diet that he was so, he made a very ample confession of the need of a reform. “We know,” so ran the instructions put into the hands of his nuncio on setting out for the Diet, “that for a considerable time many abominable things have found a place beside the Holy Chair - abuses in spiritual things-exorbitant straining at prerogatives-evil everywhere. From the head the malady has proceeded to the limbs; from the Pope it

³Pallavicino, tom. 1, lib. 2, cap. 7, p. 140. Sleidan, 3, 55.

has extended to the prelates; we are all gone astray, there is none that hath done rightly, no, not one.”⁴

At the hearing of these words the champions of the Papacy hung their heads; its opponents held up theirs. “We need hesitate no longer,” said the Lutheran princes of the Diet; “it is is not Luther only, but the Pope, that denounces the corruptions of the Church: reform is the order of the day, not merely at Wittemberg, but at Rome also.”

[489] There was all the while an essential difference between these two men, and their reforms: Adrian would have lopped off a few of the more rotten of the branches; Luther was for uprooting the evil tree, and planting a good one in its stead. This was a reform little to the taste of Adrian, and so, before beginning his own reform, he demanded that Luther’s should be put down. It was needful, Adrian doubtless thought, to apply the pruningknife to the vine of the Church, but still more needful was it to apply the axe to the tree of Lutheranism. For those who would push reform with too great haste, and to too great a length, he had nothing but the stake, and accordingly he called on the Diet to execute the imperial edict of death upon Luther, whose heresy he described as having the same infernal origin, as disgraced by the same abominable acts, and tending to the same tremendous issue, as that of Mahomet.⁵ As regarded the reform which he himself meditated, he took care to say that he would guard against the two evils mentioned above; he would neither be too extreme nor too precipitate; “he must proceed gently, and by degrees,” step by step- which Luther, who translated the brief of Adrian into German, with marginal notes, interpreted to mean, a few centuries between each step?⁶

The Pope had communicated to the Diet, somewhat vaguely, his projected measure of reformation, and the Diet felt the more justified in favoring Adrian with their own ideas of what that measure ought to be. First of all they told Adrian that to think of executing the Edict of Worms against Luther would be madness. To put the Reformer to death for denouncing the abuses Adrian himself had acknowledged, would not be more unjust than it would be dangerous. It would be

⁴Sleidan, bk. 4, p. 59. Pallavicino, tom. 1, lib. 2, cap. 7, p. 141.

⁵Pallavicino, tom. 1, p. 141.

⁶Sleidan, bk. 4, p. 60.

sure to provoke all insurrection that would deluge Germany with blood. Luther must be refuted from Scripture, for his writings were in the hands and his opinions were in the hearts of many of the population. They knew of but one way of settling the controversy—a General Council, namely; and they demanded that such a Council should be summoned, to meet in some neutral German town, within the year, and that the laity as well as the clergy should have a seat and voice in it. To this not very palatable request the princes appended another still more unpalatable—the “Hundred Grievances,” as it was termed, and which was a terrible catalogue of the exactions, frauds, oppressions, and wrongs that Germany had endured at the hands of the Popes, and which it had long silently groaned under, but the redress of which the Diet now demanded, with certification that if within a reasonable time a remedy was not forthcoming, the princes would take the matter into their own hands. ⁷

The Papal nuncio had seen and heard sufficient to convince him that he had stayed long enough at Nuremberg. He hastily quitted the city, leaving it to some other to be the bearer of this ungracious message to the Pontiff.

Till the Diet should arrange its affairs with the Pontiff, it resolved that the Gospel should continue to be preached. What a triumph for Protestantism! But a year before, at Worms, the German princes had concurred with Charles V. in the edict of death passed on Luther. Now, not only do they refuse to execute that edict, but they decree that the pure Gospel shall be preached. ⁸ This indicates rapid progress. Luther hailed it as a triumph, and the echoes of his shout came back from the Swiss hills in the joy it awakened among the Reformers of Helvetia.

⁷Ibid, bk. 4, p. 63. Pallavicino, lib. 2, cap. 8.

⁸“Che in questo tempo si predicasse piamente e mansuetamente il puro Evangelio e la Scrittura approvata secondo resposizione approvata e ricevuta dlla Chiesa” - “That in the meantime the pure Gospel be preached piously and soberly, according to the exposition of Scripture received and approved by the Church.” (Pallavicino, lib. 2, cap. 8, p. 146.) The decree was ambiguous, remarks Pallavicino. Each put his own interpretation upon the phrase “the pure Gospel.” The phrase “exposition hitherto in use” was also variously interpreted. According, said some, to the manner of Thomas Aquinas and other medieval doctors; according, said others, to that of the more ancient, Cyprian, Augustine, etc. The decree, nevertheless, helped to shield the Protestant preachers.

In due course the recess, or decree, of the Diet of Nuremberg reached the Seven-hilled City, and was handed in at the Vatican. The meek Adrian was beside himself with rage. Luther was not to be burned! a General Council was demanded! a hundred grievances, all duly catalogued, must be redressed! and there was, moreover, a quiet hint that if the Pope did not look to this matter in time, others would attend to it. Adrian sat down, and poured out a torrent of invectives and threatenings, than which nothing more fierce and bitter had ever emanated from the Vatican.⁹ Frederick of Saxony, against whom this fulmination was thundered, put his hand upon his sword's hilt when he read it. "No," said Luther, the only one of the three who was able to command his temper, "we must have no war. No one shall fight for the Gospel." Peace was preserved.

[490] The rage of the Papal party was embittered by the checks it was meeting with. War had been averted, but persecution broke out. At every step the Reformation gathered new glory. The courage of the Reformer and the learning of the scholar had already illustrated it, but now it was to be glorified by the devotion of the martyr. It was not in Wittemberg that the first stake was planted. Charles V. would have dragged Luther to the pile, nay, he would have burned the entire Wittemberg school in one fire, had he had the power; but he could act in Germany only so far as the princes went with him. It was otherwise in his hereditary dominions of the Low Countries; there he could do as he pleased; and there it was that the storm, after muttering awhile, at last burst out. At Antwerp the Gospel had found entrance into the Augustine convent, and the inmates not only embraced the truth, but in some instances began to preach it with power. This drew upon the convent the eyes of the inquisitors who had been sent into Flanders. The friars were apprehended, imprisoned, and condemned to death. One recanted; others managed to escape; but three—Henry Voes, John Esch, and Lambert Thorn—braved the fire. They were carried in chains to Brussels, and burned in the great square of that city on the 1st of July, 1523.¹⁰ They behaved nobly at the stake. While the multitude around them were weeping, they sang songs of joy. Though about to undergo a terrible death, no

⁹See Adrian's energetic epistle, in D'Aubigne, pp.132-185; Edin., 1846.

¹⁰The execution of the third, Lambert Thorn, followed that of the first two by a few days.

sorrow darkened their faces; their looks, on the contrary, bespoke the gladness and triumph of their spirits. Even the inquisitors were deeply moved, and waited long before applying the torch, in the hope of prevailing with the youths to retract and save their lives. Their entreaties could extort no answer but this—"We will die for the name of Jesus Christ." At length the pile was kindled, and even amid the flames the psalm ascended from their lips, and joy continued to light up their countenances. So died the first martyrs of the Reformation-illustrious heralds of those hundreds of thousands who were to follow them by the same dreadful road-not dreadful to those who walk by faith-to the everlasting mansion of the sky. ¹¹

Three confessors of the Gospel had the stake consumed; in their place it had created hundreds. "Wherever the smoke of their burning blew," said Erasmus, "it bore with it the seeds of heretics." Luther heard of their death with thanksgiving. A cause which had produced martyrs bore the seal of Divine authentication, and was sure of victory.

Adrian of Rome, too, lived to hear of the death of these youths. The persecutions had begun, but Adrian's reforms had not yet commenced. The world had seen the last of these reforms in the lurid light that streamed from the stake in the great square of Brussels. Adrian died on the 14th of September of the same year, and the estimation in which the Romans held him may be gathered from the fact that, during the night which succeeded the day on which he breathed his last, they adorned the house of his

764 physician with garlands, and wrote over its portals this inscription - "To the savior of his country."

¹¹Sleidan, bk. 4, pp. 63, 64.Ranke, vol. 1, p. 75.

Chapter 4: Pope Clement and the Nuremberg Diet

The New Pope—Policy of Clement—Second Diet at Nuremberg—Campeggio—His Instructions to the Diet—The “Hundred Grievances”—Rome’s Policy of Dissimulation—Surprise of the Princes—They are Asked to Execute the Edict of Worms—Device of the Princes—A General Council—Vain Hopes—The Harbor—Still at Sea—Protestant Preaching in Nuremberg—Proposal to hold a Diet at Spires—Disgust of the Legate—Alarm of the Vatican—Both Sides Prepare for the Spires Diet

Picture: The Papal Nuncio Chierogato in Nuremberg

Picture: Gala-day in Nuremberg (time, Sixteenth Century)

Adrian was dead. His scheme for the reform of the Papacy, with all the hopes and fears it had excited, descended with him to the grave. Cardinal Guilio de Medici, an unsuccessful candidate at the last election, had better fortune this time, and now mounted the Pontifical throne. The new Pope, who took the title of Clement VII., made haste to reverse the policy of his predecessor. Pallavicino was of opinion that the greatest evils and dangers of the Papacy had arisen from the choice of a “saint” to fill the Papal chair. Clement VII. took care to let the world know that its present occupant was a “man of affairs”—no austere man, with neither singing nor dancing in his palace; no senile dreamer of reforms; but one who knew both to please the Romans and to manage foreign courts. “But it is in the storm that the pilot proves his skill,” says Ranke.¹ Perilous times had come. The great winds had begun to blow, and the nations were laboring, as the ocean heaves before a tempest. Two powerful kings were fighting in Italy; the Turk was brandishing his scimitar on the Austrian frontier; but the quarter of the sky that gave Clement VII. the greatest concern was Wittemberg. There a storm was brewing which would try his seamanship to the utmost. Leo X. had trifled

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¹Ranke, vol. 1, p. 75.

with this affair. Adrian VI. had imagined that he had only to utter the magic word “reform,” and the billows would subside and the winds sink to rest. Clement would prove himself an abler pilot; he would act as a statesman, as a Pope.

Early in the spring of 1524, the city of Nuremberg was honoured a second time with the presence of the Imperial Diet within its walls. The Pope’s first care was to send a right man as legate to this assembly. He selected Cardinal Campeggio, a man of known ability, of great experience, and of weight of character - the fittest, in short, his court could furnish. His journey to the Italian frontier was like a triumphal march. But when he entered upon German soil all these tokens of public enthusiasm forsook him, and when he arrived at the gates of Nuremberg he looked in vain for the usual procession of magistrates and clergy, marshalled under cross and banner, to bid him welcome. Alas! how the times had changed! The proud ambassador of Clement passed quietly through the streets, and entered his hotel, as if he had been an ordinary traveller. ²

The instructions Campeggio had received from his master directed him to soothe the Elector Frederick, who was still smarting from Adrian’s furious letter; and to withhold no promise and neglect no art which might prevail with the Diet, and make it subservient. This done, he was to strike at Luther. If they only had the monk at the stake, all would be well.

The able and astute envoy of Clement acted his part well. He touched modestly on his devotion to Germany, which had induced him to accept this painful mission when all others had declined it. He described the tender solicitude and sleepless care of his master, the Pope, whom he likened now to a pilot, sitting aloft, and watching anxiously, while all on board slept; and now to a shepherd, driving away the wolf, and leading his flock into good pastures. He could not refrain from expressing “his wonder that so many great and honorable princes should suffer the religion, rites, and ceremonies wherein they were born and bred, and in which their fathers and progenitors had died, to be abolished and trampled upon.” He begged them to think where all this would end, namely, in a universal uprising of peoples against their rulers, and the destruction

²Cochlaeus, p. 82. D’Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 148

of Germany. As for the Turk, it was unnecessary for him to say much. The mischief he threatened Christendom with was plain to all men.³

The princes heard him with respect, and thanked him for his good will and his friendly counsels; but to come to the matter in hand, the German nation, said they, sent a list of grievances in writing to Rome; they would like to know if the Pope had returned any answer, and what it was.

Campeggio, though he assumed an air of surprise, had expected this interrogatory to be put to him, and was not unprepared for the part he was to act. "As to their demands," he said, "there had been only three copies of them brought privately to Rome, whereof one had fallen into his hands; but the Pope and college of cardinals could not believe that they had been framed by the princes; they thought that some private persons had published them in hatred to the court of Rome; and thus he had no instructions as to that particular."⁴

The surprise the legate's answer gave the Diet, and the indignation it kindled among its members, may be imagined.

The Emperor Charles, whom the war with Francis kept in Spain, had sent his ambassador, John Hunnaart, to the Diet to complain that the decree of Worms, which had been enacted with their unanimous consent, was not observed, and to demand that it be put in execution - in other words, that Luther be put to death, and that the Gospel be proscribed in all the States of the Empire.⁵ Campeggio had made the same request in his master's name.

"Impossible!" cried many of the deputies; "to attempt such a thing would be to plunge Germany into war and bloodshed."

Campeggio and Hunnaart insisted, nevertheless, that the princes should put in force the edict against Luther and his doctrines, to which they had been consenting parties. What was the Diet to do?

³Sleidan, bk. 4, p. 68.

⁴Ibid., bk. iv., p. 69. Fra-Paolo Sarpi, livr. 1, pp. 64, 65. "It is evident," says the French translator and editor (Pierre Francois le Courayer) of Sarpi's History of the Council of Trent, "that both the Pope and the legate believed themselves justified in this falsehood for the good of the cause. For it is not doubted that the "Hundred Grievances" had been received at the court of Rome, and Pallavicino even does not leave us ignorant that the legate was instructed to dissemble the fact of their reception, in order to treat on more favorable terms with the princes."

⁵Pallavicino, lib. 2, cap. 10, p. 155.

It could not repeal the edict, and it dared not enforce it. The princes hit upon a clever device for silencing the Pope who was pushing them on, and appeasing the people who were holding them back. They passed a decree saying that the Edict of Worms should be vigorously enforced, as far as possible. ⁶ Oedipus himself could hardly have said what this meant. Practically it was the repeal of the edict; for the majority of the States had declared that to enforce it was not possible. [492]

Campeggio and Hunnaart, the Spanish envoy from Charles, V., had gained what was a seeming victory, but a real defeat. Other defeats awaited them.

Having dexterously muzzled the emperor's ban, the next demand of the Nuremberg Diet was for a General Council. There was a traditional belief in the omnipotency of this expedient to correct all abuses and end all controversies. When the sky began to lower, and a storm appeared about to sweep over Christendom, men turned their eyes to a Council, as to a harbor of refuge: once within it, the laboring vessel would be at rest - tossed no longer upon the billows. The experiment had been tried again and again, and always with the same result, and that result failure - signal failure. In the recent past were the two Councils of Constance and Basle. These had ended, like all that preceded them, in disappointment. Much had been looked for from them, but nothing had been realised. They appeared in the retrospect like goodly twin trees, laden with leaves and blossoms, but they brought no fruit to perfection. With regard to Constance, if it had humiliated three Popes, it had exalted a fourth, and he the haughtiest of them all; and as for Reformation, had not the Council devoted its whole time and power to devising measures for the extinction of that reforming spirit which alone could have remedied the evils complained of? There was one man there worth a hundred Councils: how had they dealt with him? They had dragged him to the stake, and all the while he was burning, cursed him as a heretic! And what was the consequence? Why, that the stream of corruption, dammed up for a moment, had broken out afresh, and was now flowing with torrent deeper, broader, and more irresistible than ever. But the majority of the princes convened at Nuremberg [493] [494]

⁶Cochlaeus, p. 84. D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 145.

were unable to think of other remedy, and so, once again, the old demand was urged-a General Council, to be held on German soil.

However, the princes will concert measures in order that this time the Council shall not be abortive; now at last, it will give the world a Pope who shall be a true father to Christendom, together with a pious, faithful, and learned hierarchy, and holy and laborious priests-in short, the "golden age," so long waited for. The princes will summon a Diet-a national and lay Diet-to meet at Spires, in November of this year. And, further, they will take steps to evoke the real sentiments of Germany on the religious question, and permit the wishes of its several cities and States to be expressed in the Diet; and, in this way, a Reformation will be accomplished such as Germany wishes. The princes believed that they were ending their long and dangerous navigation, and were at last in sight of the harbor.

So had they often thought before, but they had awakened to find that they were still at sea, with the tempest lowering overhead, and the white reefs gleaming pale through the waters below. They were destined to repeat this experience once more. The very idea of such a Diet as was projected was an insult to the Papacy. For a secular assembly to meet and discuss religious questions, and settle ecclesiastical reforms, was to do a great deal more than paving the way for a General Council; it was to assume its powers and exercise its functions; it was to be that Council itself-nay, it was to go further still, it was to seat itself in the chair of the Pontiff, to whom alone belonged the decision in all matters of faith. It was to pluck the scepter from the hands of the man who held himself divinely invested with the government of the Church.

The Papal legate and the envoy of Charles V. offered a stout resistance to the proposed resolution of the princes. They represented to them what an affront that resolve would be to the Papal chair, what an attack upon the prerogatives of the Pontiff. The princes, however, were not to be turned from their purpose. They decreed that a Diet should assemble at Spires, in November, and that meanwhile the States and free towns of Germany should express their mind as regarded the abuses to be corrected and the reforms to be instituted, so that, when the Council met, the Diet might be able to speak in the name of the Fatherland, and demand such Reformation of the Church as the nation wished.

Meanwhile the Protestant preachers redoubled their zeal; morning and night they proclaimed the Gospel in the churches. The two great cathedrals of Nuremberg were filled to overflowing with an attentive audience. The Lord's Supper was dispensed according to the apostolic mode, and 4,000 persons, including the emperor's sister, the Queen of Denmark, and others of rank, joined in the celebration of the ordinance. The mass was forsaken; the images were turned out of doors; the Scriptures were explained according to the early Fathers; and scarce could the Papal legate go or return from the imperial hall, where the Diet held its meetings, without being jostled in the street by the crowds hurrying to the Protestant sermon. The tolling of the bells for worship, the psalm pealed forth by thousands of voices, and wafted across the valley of the Pegnitz to the imperial chateau on the opposite height, sorely tried the equanimity of the servants of the Pope and the emperor. Campeggio saw Nuremberg plunging every day deeper into heresy; he saw the authority of his master set at nought, and the excommunicated doctrines every hour enlisting new adherents, who feared neither the ecclesiastical anathema nor the imperial ban. He saw all this with indignation and disgust, and yet he was entirely without power to prevent it.

Germany seemed nearer than it had been at any previous moment to a national Reformation. It promised to reach the goal by a single bound. A few months, and the Alps will do more than divide between two countries; they will divide between two Churches. No longer will the bulls and palls of the Pope cross their snows, and no longer will the gold of Germany flow back to swell the wealth and maintain the pride of the city whence they come. The Germans will find for themselves a Church and a creed, without asking humbly the permission of the Italians. They will choose their own pastors, and exercise their own government; and leave the Shepherd of the Tiber to care for his flock on the south of the mountains, without stretching his crosier to the north of them. This was the import of what the Diet had agreed to do.

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We do not wonder that Campeggio and Hunnaart viewed the resolution of the princes with dismay. In truth, the envoy of the emperor had about as much cause to be alarmed as the nuncio of the Pope. Charles's authority in Germany was tottering as well as Clement's; for if the States should break away from the Roman faith,

the emperor's sway would be weakened-in fact, all but annihilated; the imperial dignity would be shorn of its splendor; and those great schemes, in the execution of which the emperor had counted confidently on the aid of the Germans, would have to be abandoned as impracticable.

But it was in the Vatican that the resolution of the princes excited the greatest terror and rage. Clement comprehended at a glance the full extent of the disaster that threatened his throne. All Germany was becoming Lutheran; the half of his kingdom was about to be torn from him. Not a stone must be left unturned, not an art known in the Vatican must be neglected, if by any means the meeting of the Diet at Spire may be prevented.

To Spire all eyes are now turned, where the fate of the Papedom is to be decided. On both sides there is the bustle of anxious preparation. The princes invite the cities and States to speak boldly out, and declare their grievances, and say what reforms they wish to have enacted. In the opposite camp there is, if possible, still greater activity and preparation. The Pope is sounding an alarm, and exhorting his friends, in prospect of this emergency, to unite their counsels and their arms. While both sides are busy preparing for the eventful day, we shall pause, and turn our attention to the city where the Diet just breaking up had held its sittings.

Chapter 5: Nuremberg (This Chapter is founded on Notes made on the Spot by the Author in 1871)

Three Hundred Years Since—Site of Nuremberg—Depot of
Commerce in Middle Ages—Its Population—Its Patricians and
Plebeians—Their Artistic Skill—Nuremberg a Free Town—Its
Burgraves—Its Oligarchy—Its Subject Towns—Fame of its
Arts—Albert Durer—Hans Sachs—Its Architecture and
Marvels—Enchantment of the Place—Rath-Haus—State
Dungeons—Implements of Torture

Picture: The River Pegnitz, intersecting the City of Nuremberg

Picture: St. Sebalds Church, Nuremberg

Nuremberg three hundred years ago was one of the more famous of the cities of Europe. It invites our study as a specimen of those few fortunate communities which, preserving a feeble intelligence in times of almost universal ignorance and barbarism, and enjoying a measure of independence in an age when freedom was all but unknown, were able, as the result of the exceptional position they occupied, to render services of no mean value to the civilization and religion of the world.

The distinction and opulence which Nuremberg enjoyed, in the fifteenth century and onward to the time of the Reformation, it owed to a variety of causes. Its salubrious air; the sweep of its vast plains, on all sides touching the horizon, with a single chain of purple hills to redeem the landscape from monotony; and the facilities for hunting and other exercises which it afforded, made it a pleasant residence, and often drew thither the emperor and his court. With the court came, of course, other visitors. The presence of the emperor in Nuremberg helped to assemble men of genius and culture within its walls, and invested it, moreover, with no little political importance.

Nuremberg owed more to another cause, namely, its singularly central position. Being set down on one of the world's greatest highways, it formed the center of a network of commercial routes,

which ramified over a large part of the globe, and embraced the two hemispheres.

[496] Situated on the great Franconian plain—a plain which was the Mesopotamia of the West, seeing that, like the Oriental Mesopotamia, it lay between two great rivers, the Danube and the Rhine—Nuremberg became one of the great emporiums of the commerce carried on between Asia and Europe. In those ages, when roads were far from common, and railways did not exist at all, rivers were the main channels of communication between nation and nation, and the principal means by which they effected an interchange of their commodities. The products of Asia and the Levant entered the mouths of the Danube by the Black Sea, and, ascending that stream into Germany, they were carried across the plain to Nuremberg. From Nuremberg this merchandise was sent on its way to the Rhine, and, by the numerous outlets of that river, diffused among the nations of the northwest of Europe. The commerce of the Adriatic reached Nuremberg by another route which crossed the Tyrol. Thus many converging lines found here their common meeting-place, and from hence radiated over the West. Founded in the beginning of the tenth century, the seat of the first Diet of the Empire, the meeting-place moreover of numerous nationalities, the depot of a vast and enriching commerce, and inhabited by a singularly quick and inventive population, Nuremberg rose steadily in size and importance. The fifteenth century saw it a hive of industry, a cradle of art, and a school of letters.

In the times we speak of, Nuremberg had a population of 70,000. This, in our day, would not suffice to place a city in the first rank; but it was different then, when towns of only 30,000 were accounted populous. Frankfort-on-the-Main could not boast of more than half the population of Nuremberg. But though large for its day, the number of its population contributed but little to the city's eminence. Its renown rested on higher grounds—on the enterprise, the genius, and the wealth of its inhabitants.

Its citizens were divided into two classes, the patrician and the plebeian. The line that separated the two orders was immovable. No amount of wealth or of worth could lift up the plebeian into the patrician rank. In the same social grade in which the cradle of the citizen had been placed must the evening of life find him.

Nuremberg (This Chapter is founded on Notes made on the Spot by the Author in

1871)

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~~The patricians held their patents of nobility from the emperor, a~~
circumstance of which they were not a little proud, as attesting the descent of their families from very ancient times. They inhabited fine mansions, and expended the revenues of their estates in a princely splendor and a lavish hospitality, delighting greatly in fetes and tournaments, but not unmindful the while of the claims to patronage which the arts around them possessed, and the splendors of which invested their city with so great a halo.

The plebeians were mostly craftsmen, but craftsmen of exceeding skill. No artificers in all Europe could compete with them. Since the great sculptors of Greece, there had arisen no race of artists which could wield the chisel like the men of Nuremberg. Not so bold perhaps as their Greek predecessors, their invention was as prolific and their touch as exquisite. They excelled in all manner of cunning workmanship in marble and bronze, in metal and ivory, in stone and wood. Their city of Nuremberg they filled with their creations, which strangers from afar came to gaze upon and admire. The fame of its artists was spread throughout Europe, and scarce was there a town of any note in any kingdom in which the “Nuremberg hand” was not to be seen unmistakably certified in some embodiment of quaintness, or of beauty, or of utility. ¹

A more precious possession still than either its exquisite genius or its unrivalled art did Nuremberg boast: liberty, namely-liberty, lacking which genius droops, and the right hand forgets its cunning. Nuremberg was one of the free cities of Germany. In those days there were not fewer than ninety-three such towns in the Empire. They were green oases in the all but boundless desert of oppression

¹One is surprised to learn how many of the arts in daily use were invented in Nuremberg. The oldest specimens of stained glass are said to be here. Playing-cards were manufactured here as early as 1380. In 1390 a citizen of Nuremberg built a paper-mill, undoubtedly the first in Germany. There are records of cannon being cast here as early as 1356. Previously cannon were constructed of iron bars placed lengthwise and held together by hoops. The celebrated cannon “Mons Meg,” at Edinburgh Castle, is constructed after that fashion. The common opinion, supported by Polydore Virgil and other learned writers, is that gunpowder was also invented at Nuremberg, by a Franciscan friar named Berthold Schwartz, in 1378. Here the first watches were made, in 1500; they were called “Nuremberg eggs.” Here the air-gun was invented, 1560; the clarinet, 1690. Here Erasmus Ebner, in 1556, hit upon that particular alloy of metals which forms brass. The brass of former times was a different combination.

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and misery which the Europe of those days presented. They owed their rise in part to war, but mainly to commerce. When the emperors on occasion found themselves hard pushed, in the long war which they waged with the Popes, when their soldiers were becoming few and their exchequer empty, they applied to the towns to furnish them with the means of renewing the contest. They offered them charters of freedom on condition of their raising so many men-at-arms, or paying over a certain sum to enable them to continue their campaigns. The bargain was a welcome one on both sides. Many of these towns had to buy their enfranchisement with a great sum, but a little liberty is worth a great deal of gold. Thus it was on the red fields of the period that their freedom put forth its earliest blossoms; and it was amid the din of arms that the arts of peace grew up.

But commerce did more than war to call into existence such towns as Nuremberg. With the prosecution of foreign trade came wealth, and with wealth came independence and intelligence. Men began to have a glimpse of higher powers than those of brute force, and of wider rights than any included within the narrow circle of feudalism. They bought with their money, or they wrested by their power, charters of freedom from their sovereigns, or their feudal barons. They constituted themselves into independent and self-governed bodies. They were, in fact, republics on a small scale, in the heart of great monarchies. Within the walls of their cities slavery was abolished, laws were administered, and rights were enjoyed. Such towns began to multiply as it drew towards the era of the Reformation, not in Germany only, but in France, in Italy, and in the Low Countries, and they were among the first to welcome the approach of that great moral and social renovation.

Nuremberg, which held so conspicuous a place in this galaxy of free towns, was first of all governed by a Burgrave, or Stadtholder. It is a curious fact that the royal house of Prussia make their first appearance in history as the Burgraves of Nuremberg. That office they held till about the year 1414, when Frederick IV. sold his right, together with his castle, to the Nurembergers, and with the sum thus obtained purchased the Marquisate of Brandenburg. This was the second stage in the advance of that house to the pinnacle of political greatness to which it long afterwards attained.

Nuremberg (This Chapter is founded on Notes made on the Spot by the Author in

1871)

dccli

~~When the reign of the burgrave came to an end, a republic,~~
or rather oligarchy, next succeeded as the form of government in Nuremberg. First of all was a Council of Three Hundred, which had the power of imposing taxes and contributions, and of deciding on the weighty question of peace and war. The Council of Three Hundred annually elected a smaller body, consisting of only thirty members, by whom the ordinary government of the city was administered. The Great Council was composed of patricians, with a sprinkling of the more opulent of the merchants and artificers. The Council of Thirty was composed of patricians only.

Further, Nuremberg had a considerable territory around it, of which it was the capital, and which was amply studded with towns. Outside its walls was a circuit of some hundred miles, in which were seven cities, and 480 boroughs and villages, of all of which Nuremberg was mistress. When we take into account the fertility of the land, and the extensiveness of the trade that enriched the region, and in which all these towns shared, we see in Nuremberg and its dependencies a principality far from contemptible in either men or resources. “The kingdom of Bohemia,” says Gibbon, “was less opulent than the adjacent city of Nuremberg.”² Lying in the center of Southern Germany, the surrounding States in defending themselves were defending Nuremberg, and thus it could give its undivided attention to the cultivation of those arts in which it so greatly excelled, when its less happily situated neighbors were wasting their treasure and pouring out their blood on the battle-field.

The “Golden Bull,” in distributing the imperial honors among the more famous of the German cities, did not overlook this one. If it assigned to Frankfort the distinction of being the place of the emperor’s “election,” and if it yielded to Augsburg the honour of seeing him crowned, it required that the emperor should hold his first court in Nuremberg. The castle of the mediaeval emperors is still to be seen. It crowns the height which rises on the northern bank of the Pegnitz, immediately within the city-gate, on the right, as one enters from the north, and from this eminence it overlooks the town which lies at its feet, thickly planted along the stream that divides it into two equal halves. The builder of the royal chateau obviously

²Decline and Fall, vol. 9, p. 216; Edin., 1832.

was compelled to follow, not the rules of architecture, but the angles and irregularities of the rock on which he placed the castle, which is a strong, uncouth, unshapely fabric, forming a striking contrast to the many graceful edifices in the city on which it looks down.

[498] In this city was the Diet at this time assembled. It was the seat (938) of the first Diet of the Empire, and since that day how often had the grandees, the mailed chivalry, and the spiritual principedoms of Germany gathered within its walls! One can imagine how gay Nuremberg was on these occasions, when the banner of the emperor floated on its castle, and warders were going their rounds on its walls, and sentinels were posted in its flanking towers, and a crowd of lordly and knightly company, together with a good deal that was neither lordly nor knightly, were thronging its streets, and peering curiously into its studios and workshops, and ransacking its marts and warehouses, stocked with the precious products of far-distant climes. Nor would the Nurembergers be slow to display to the eyes of their visitors the marvels of their art and the products of their enterprise, in both of which they were at that time unequalled on this side of the Alps. Nuremberg was, in its way, on these occasions an international exhibition, and not without advantage to both exhibitor and visitor, stimulating, as no doubt it did, the trade of the one, and refining the taste of the other. The men who gathered at these times to Nuremberg were but too accustomed to attach glory to nothing save tournaments and battle-fields; but the sight of this city, so rich in achievements of another kind, would help to open their eyes, and show them that there was a more excellent way to fame, and that the chisel could win triumphs which, if less bloody than those of the sword, were far more beneficial to mankind, and gave to their authors a renown that was far purer and more lasting than that of arms.

Now it was the turn of the Nurembergers themselves to wonder. The Gospel had entered their gates, and many welcomed it as a “pearl” more to be esteemed than the richest jewel or the finest fabric that India or Asia had ever sent to their markets. It was to listen to the new wonders now for the first time brought to their knowledge, that the citizens of Nuremberg were day by day crowding the Church of St. Sebaldus and the Cathedral of St. Lawrence. Among these multitudes, now hanging on the lips of Osiander and other preachers,

Nuremberg (This Chapter is founded on Notes made on the Spot by the Author in
1871) dccccliii
was ~~Albert Durer, the great painter, sculptor, and mathematician.~~
This man of genius embraced the faith of Protestantism, and became
a friend of Luther. His house is still shown, near the old imperial
castle, hard by the northern gate of the city. Of his great works, only
a few remain in Nuremberg; they have mostly gone to enrich other
cities, that were rich enough to buy what Albert Durer's native town
was not wealthy enough in these latter times to retain.

In Nuremberg, too, lived Hans Sachs, the poet, also a disciple
of the Gospel and a friend of Luther. The history of Sachs is a most
romantic one. He was the son of a tailor in Nuremberg, and was
born in 1494, and named Hans after his father. Hans adopted the
profession of a shoemaker, and the house in which he worked still
exists, and is situated in the same quarter of the town as that of Albert
Durer. But the workshop of Hans Sachs could not hold his genius.
Quitting his stall one day, he sallied forth bent on seeing the world.
He passed some time in the brilliant train of the Emperor Maximilian.
He returned to Nuremberg and married. The Reformation breaking
forth, his mind opened to the glow of the truth, and then it was that
his poetic imagination, invigorated and sanctified, burst out in holy
song, which resounded through Germany, and helped to prepare
the minds of men for the mighty revolution that was going forward.
"The spiritual songs of Hans Sachs," says D'Aubigne, "and his Bible
in verse, were a powerful help to this great work.

It would perhaps be hard to decide who did the most for it—
the Prince-Elector of Saxony, administrator of the Empire, or the
Nuremberg shoemaker!"

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Here, too, and about the same period, lived Peter Vischer, the
sculptor and caster in bronze; Adam Craft, the sculptor, whose
"seven pillars" are still to be seen in the Church of St. Claire; Veit
Stoss, the carver in wood; and many besides, quick of eye and
cunning of hand, whose names have perished, now live in their
works alone, which not only served as models to the men of their
own age, but have stimulated the ingenuity and improved the taste
of many in ours.

On another ground Nuremberg is worth our study. It is perhaps
the best-preserved mediaeval town north of the Alps. To visit it,
then, though only in the page of the describer, is to see the very
scenes amid which some of the great events of the Reformation were

transacted, and the very streets on which their actors walked and the houses in which they lived. In Spain there remain to this day cities of an age still more remote, and an architecture still more curious. There is Toledo, whose seven-hilled site, washed by the furious torrent of the Tagus, lifts high in the air, and sets in bold relief against the sky, its many beautiful structures-its lovely Alcazar, its cathedral roofs, its ruined synagogues, its Moorish castles- the whole looking more like the creation of a magician than the work of the mason. There is Cordova, with its wonderful mosque, fashioned out of the spolia opima of Africa and the Levant, and spread around this unique temple is perhaps the greatest labyrinth of narrow and winding lanes that anywhere exists. There is Granada, whose streets and fountains and gardens are still redolent of the Moor, and which borrows a further glory from the two magnificent objects by which it is overhung - the one of art, the Alhambra, whose unique and dazzling beauty it has defied the spoiler to destroy; and the other of nature, the Sierra Nevada, which towers aloft in snowy grandeur, and greets its brother Atlas across the Straits. And, not to multiply instances, there is Malaga, a relic of a still more ancient time than the Moorish age, showing us how the Phoenicians built, and what sort of cities were upon the earth when civilization was confined to the shores of the Mediterranean, and the mariner had not yet ventured to steer his bark beyond "Pillars of Hercules."

[500] But there is no city in Northern Europe-no relic of the architecture of the Germanic nations, when that architecture was in its prime, or had but recently begun to decline, at all to be compared with Nuremberg. As it was when the emperor trod its streets, and the magnificence of Germany was gathered into it, and the flourish of trumpets and the roll of drums blended with the peaceful din of its chisels and hammers, so is it now. The same portals with their rich carvings; the same windows with their deep mullions; the same fountains with their curious emblematic devices and groups, in bronze or in stone; the same peaked and picturesque gables; the same lofty roofs, running up into the sky and presenting successive rows of attic windows, their fronts all richly embellished and hung with draperies of wreathed work, wrought in stone by the hands of cunning men-in short, the same assemblage of curious, droll, beautiful, and majestic objects which were before the eyes of the

Nuremberg (This Chapter is founded on Notes made on the Spot by the Author in
1871) dcccclv
~~men who have been four centuries in their grave, meet the eye of the~~
traveller at this day.

In the middle of the city is the depression or valley through which the stream of the Pegnitz flows. There the buildings cluster thickly together, forming a perfect labyrinth of winding lanes, with no end of bridges and canals, and while their peaked roofs tower into the air their bases dip into the water. The rest of the city lies on the two slopes that run up from the Pegnitz, on either bank, forming thus two divisions which look at each other across the intervening valley. In this part of Nuremberg the streets are spacious, the houses of stone, large and massy, and retaining the remarkable feature we have already mentioned-exceedingly lofty roofs; for in some instances six storeys of upright mason-work are surmounted by other six storeys of slanting roof, with their complement of attic windows, suggesting the idea of a house upon a house, or of two cities, the one upon the ground, the other in the air, and forming no unmeet emblem of the ancient classification of the citizens of Nuremberg into plebeian and patrician.

To walk through Nuremberg with the hasty step and cursory eye with which a mere modern town may be surveyed is impossible. The city, amid all its decay, is a cabinet of rare curiosities, a gallery of master-pieces. At every step one is brought up by some marvel or other-a witty motto; a quaint device; a droll face; a mediaeval saint in wood, lying as lumber, it may be, in some workshop; a bishop, or knight, or pilgrim, in stone, who has seen better days; an elegant fountain, at which prince or emperor may have stopped to drink, giving its waters as copiously as ever; a superb portal, from which patrician may have walked forth when good Maximilian was emperor; or rich oriel, at which bright eyes looked out when gallant knight rode past; or some palatial mansion that speaks of times when the mariner's compass was unknown, and the stream of commerce on its way to the West flowed through Nuremberg, and not as now round the Cape, or through the Straits of Gibraltar. ³

³The discovery of the mariner's compass gave a great blow to the prosperity of Nuremberg. The mariner's compass, as every one knows, revolutionized the carrying trade of the world, closing old channels of commerce and opening new. After this invention, ships freighted in the harbors of the East unloaded only when they reached the ports of the Western world. The commerce that had flowed for centuries across the

After a time the place, so full of fanciful and droll and beautiful imagining, begins to act upon one like an enchantment. The spirit that lives in these creations is as unabated as if the artist had just laid down his chisel. One cannot persuade one's self that the hands that fashioned them have long ago mouldered into dust. No; their authors are living still, and one looks to see them walk out at their doors, and feels sure that one would know them

- those cunning men, that race of geniuses, whose wit and wisdom, whose humor and drollery and mirth burst out and overflowed till the very stones of their city laughed along with them. Where are all these men now? All sleeping together in the burial-ground, about a mile and a half outside the city gate, each in his narrow cell, the skill of their right hand forgotten, but the spell of their power still lingering on the city where they lived, to fascinate and delight and instruct the men of after-times.

Of the edifices of Nuremberg we shall visit only one-the Rath-Haus, or Hotel de Ville, where the Diets of the Empire held their sitting, and where, of course, the Diet that had just ended in the resolution which so exasperated Campeggio and terrified the Vatican had held its deliberations. It is a magnificent pile, in the Italian style, and externally in perfect preservation. A lofty portal gives admission to a spacious quadrangle. This building was erected in 1619, but it includes an older town-hall of date 1340. To this older portion belongs the great saloon, variously used in former times as a banqueting hall, an audience chamber, and a place of conference for the Diet. Its floor looks as if it would afford standing-room for all the citizens of Nuremberg. But vastness is the only attribute now left it of its former splendor. It is long since emperor trod that floor, or warrior feasted under that roof, or Diet assembled within those walls. Time's effacing finger has been busy with it, and what

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plain on which Nuremberg stands, making it one of its main depots, was after this carried through the Straits or round the Cape; and Nuremberg would have become like a stranded galleon from which the tide had receded, but for the scientific and artistic genius of her sons. They still continued, by their skill and industry, to supply the other cities of Europe with those necessary or luxurious articles which they had not yet learned to create for themselves. The railroad is bringing back, in part at least, the trade and wealth that Nuremberg lost by the mariner's compass. It is the center of the trade between Southern and Northern Germany; besides, it has not wholly lost the artistic skill and mechanical industry for which it was so famous in olden times.

Nuremberg (This Chapter is founded on Notes made on the Spot by the Author in

1871) dcccclvii
~~was magnificence in the days of the emperor, is in ours simply~~
tawdriness. The paintings on its walls and roof, some of which are from the pencil of Albert Durer, have lost their brilliance, and are now little better than mere patches of color. The gloss has passed from the silks and velvets of its furniture; the few chairs that remain are rickety and worm-eaten, and one fears to trust one's self to them. A magnificent chandelier still hangs suspended from the roof, its gilding sadly tarnished, its lights burned out; and suggesting, as it does, to the mind the gaiety of the past, makes the dreariness and solitariness of the present to be only the more felt. So passes the glory of the world, and so has passed the imperial grandeur which often found in this hall a stage for its display.

Let us visit the dungeons immediately below the building. This will help us to form some idea of the horrors through which Liberty had to pass in her march down to modern times. Our guide leaves us for a few minutes, and when he returns he is carrying a bunch of keys in one hand and a lantern in the other. We descend a flight of stairs, and stand before a great wooden door. It is fastened crosswise with a heavy iron bar, which the guide removes. Then, selecting a key from the bunch, he undoes one lock, then another, and heaving back the ponderous door, we enter and take our first step into the gloom. We traverse a long dark corridor; at the end of it we come to another massy door, secured like the first by a heavy cross-beam. The guide undoes the fastenings, and with a creak which echoes drearily through the vaulted passage, the door is thrown open and gives us admittance. We descend several flights of stairs. The last ray of light has forsaken us a long while ago, but we go forward by the help of the lantern. What a contrast to the gilded and painted chambers above!

On either hand as we go on are the silent stone walls; overhead is the vaulted roof; at every other pace the guide stops, and calls our attention to doors in the wall on either hand, which open into numerous side chambers, or vaulted dungeons, for the reception of prisoners. To lie here, in this living grave, in utter darkness, in cold and misery, was dreadful enough; but there were more horrible things near at hand, ready to do their terrible work, and which made the unhappy occupants of these cells forget all the other honors of their dismal abode.

Passing on a pace or two further, we come to a roomier cell. We enter it, and the guide throws the glare of his lantern all round, and shows us the apparatus of torture, which rots here unused, though not unused in former days. It is a gaunt iron frame, resembling a long and narrow bedstead, fitted from end to end with a series of angular rollers. The person who was to undergo the torture was laid on this horizontal rack. With every motion of his body to and fro, the rolling prisms on which he rested grazed the vertebrae of his back, causing great suffering. This was one mode of applying the rack, the next was still more frightful. The feet of the poor victim were fastened to one end of the iron frame; his arms were raised over his head and tied with a rope, which wound round a windlass. The windlass was worked by a lever; the executioner put his hand on the lever; the windlass revolves; the rope tightens; the limbs of the victim are stretched. Another wrench: his eyes flash, his lips quiver, his teeth are clenched; he groans, he shrieks; the joints start from their sockets; and now the livid face and the sinking pulse tell that the torture has been prolonged to the furthest limit of physical endurance. The sufferer is carried back to his cell. In the course of a few weeks, when his mangled body has regained a little strength, he is brought out a second time, and laid upon the same bed of torture, to undergo yet again the same dreadful ordeal.

Let us go forward a little farther into this subterranean realm. We come at length to the central chamber. It is much more roomy than the others. Its air is dank and cold, and the water is filtering through the rock overhead. It is full of darkness, but there are worse things in it than darkness, which we can see by the help of our guide's lantern. Against the wall leans what seems a ladder; it is a machine of torture of the kind we have already described, only used vertically instead of horizontally. The person is hauled up by a rope, with a weight attached to his feet, and then he is let suddenly down, the rolling prisms grazing, as before, his naked back in his rapid descent.

There is yet another "torture" in this horrible chamber. In the center of the roof is an iron ring. Through the ring passes a strong iron chain, which hangs down and is attached to a windlass. On the floor lies a great block of stone with a ring in it. This block was attached to the feet of the victim; his hands were tied behind his back with the iron chain; and, thus bound, he was pulled up to the

Nuremberg (This Chapter is founded on Notes made on the Spot by the Author in
roof, and suddenly let fall to ¹⁸⁷¹⁾ within a foot or so of the floor. ^{dcclix} The jerk
of the descending block was so severe as commonly to dislocate his
limbs.

The unhappy man when suspended in this fashion could be dealt [502]
with as his tormentors chose. They could tear his flesh with pincers,
scorch his feet with live coals, insert burning matches beneath his
skin, flay him alive, or practice upon him any barbarity their ma-
lignity or cruelty suggested. The subject is an ungrateful one, and
we quit it. These cells were reserved for political offenders. They
were accounted too good for those tainted with heretical pravity.
Deeper dungeons, and more horrible instruments of torture, were
prepared for the confessors of the Gospel. The memorials of the
awful cruelties perpetrated on the Protestants of the sixteenth cen-
tury are to be seen in Nuremberg at this day. The “Holy Offices” of
Spain and Italy have been dismantled, and little now remains save
the walls of the buildings in which the business of the Inquisition
was carried on; but, strange to say, in Nuremberg, as we can testify
from actual observation, the whole apparatus of torture is still shown
in the subterranean chambers that were used by the agents of the
“Holy Office.” We reserve the description of these dungeons, with
their horrible instruments, till we come to speak more particularly
of the Inquisition. Even the political prisons are sufficiently dismal.
It is sad to think that such prisons existed in the heart of Germany,
and in the free town of Nuremberg, in the sixteenth century. The
far-famed “prisons of Venice”-and here too we speak from actual
inspection-are not half so gloomy and terrible. These dungeons in
Nuremberg show us how stern a thing government was in the Middle
Ages, before the Reformation had come with its balmy breath to
chase away the world’s winter, and temper the rigors of law, by
teaching mercy as well as vengeance to the ruler. Verily it was no
easy matter to be a patriot in the sixteenth century!

Chapter 6: The Ratisbon League and Reformation

Protestantism in Nuremberg-German Provinces Declare for the Gospel-Intrigues of Campeggio-Ratisbon League -Ratisbon Scheme of Reform-Rejected by the German Princes-Letter of Pope Clement to the Emperor-The Emperor's Letter from Burgos-Forbids the Diet at Spires-German Unity Broken-Two Camps-Persecution-Martyrs

Picture: Albert Durer

Picture: View of Burgos showing the Cathedral

Nuremberg had thrown itself heartily into the tide of the Reform movement. It was not to be kept back either by the muttered displeasure of the Pope's legate, or the more outspoken threatenings of the emperor's envoy. The intelligent citizens of Nuremberg felt that Protestantism brought with it a genial air, in which they could more freely breathe. It promised a re-invigoration to their city, the commerce of which had begun to wane, and its arts to decline, as the consequence of the revolutions which the mariner's compass had brought with it. Their preachers appeared daily in the pulpit; crowded congregations daily assembled in the large Church of St. Sebald, on the northern bank of the Pegnitz, and in the yet more spacious Cathedral of St. Lawrence, in the southern quarter of the city. The tapers were extinguished; the images stood neglected in their niches, or were turned out of doors; neither pyx, nor cloud of incense, nor consecrated wafer was to be seen; the altar had been changed into a table; bread and wine were brought forth and placed upon it: prayer was offered, a psalm sung, and the elements were dispensed, while some 4,000 communicants came forward to partake. The spectacle caused infinite disgust to Campeggio, but how to prevent it he knew not. Hunnaart thought, doubtless, that had his master been present, these haughty citizens would not have dared to flaunt their heresy in the face of the emperor. But Charles detained by his quarrels with Francis I. and the troubles in Spain, heresy flourished unchecked by the imperial frown.

From the hour the Diet broke up, both sides began busily to prepare for the meeting at Spires in November. The princes, on their return to their States, began to collect the suffrages of their people on the question of Church Reform; and the legate, on his part, without a day's delay, began his intrigues to prevent the meeting of an assembly which threatened to deliver the heaviest blow his master's authority had yet received.

The success of the princes friendly to the Reformed faith exceeded their expectations. The all but unanimous declaration of the provinces was, "We will serve Rome no longer." Franconia, Brandenburg, Henneburg, Windsheim, Wertheim, and Nuremberg declared against the abuses of the mass, against the seven Popish Sacraments, against the adoration of images, and, reserving the unkindest cut for the last, against the Papal supremacy.¹ These dogmatic changes would draw after them a host of administrative reforms. The pretext for the innumerable Romish exactions, of which the Germans so loudly complained, would be swept away. No longer would come functions and graces from Rome, and the gold of Germany would cease to flow thither in return. The Protestant theologians were overjoyed. A few months, and the national voice, through its constituted organ the Diet, will have pronounced in favor of Reform. The movement will be safely piloted into the harbor.

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The consternation of the Romish party was in proportion. They saw the gates of the North opening a second time, and the German hosts in full march upon the Eternal City. What was to be done? Campeggio was on the spot; and it was fortunate for Rome that he was so, otherwise the subsequent intervention of the Pope and the emperor might have come too late. The legate adopted the old policy of "divide and conquer."

Withdrawing from a Diet which contemplated usurping the most august functions of his master, Campeggio retired to Ratisbon, and there set to work to form a party among the princes of Germany. He succeeded in drawing around him Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, the Dukes of Bavaria, the Archbishop of Salzburg, and the Bishops of Trent and Ratisbon. These were afterwards joined by most of the bishops of Southern Germany. Campeggio represented to this

¹D'Aubigne, bk. 10, chap. 5.

convention that the triumph of Wittemberg was imminent, and that with the fall of the Papacy was bound up the destruction of their own power, and the dissolution of the existing order of things. To avert these terrible evils, they resolved, the 6th of July, to forbid the printing of Luther's books; to permit no married priests to live in their territories; to recall the youth of their dominions who were studying at Wittemberg; to tolerate no change in the mass or public worship; and, in fine, to put into execution the Edict of Worms against Luther. They concluded, in short, to wage a war of extermination against the new faith. ²

As a set-off against these stern measures, they promised a few very mild reforms. The ecclesiastical imposts were to be lightened, and the Church festivals made somewhat less numerous. And, not able apparently to see that they were falling into the error which they condemned in the proposed Diet at Spires, they proceeded to enact a standard of orthodoxy, consisting of the first four Latin Fathers-Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory-whose opinions were to be the rule according to which all preachers were to interpret Scripture. Such was the Ratisbon Reformation, as it came afterwards to be called.

The publication of the legate's project was viewed as an insult by the princes of the opposite party. "What right," they asked, "have a few princes and bishops to constitute themselves the representatives of the nation, and to make a law for the whole of Germany? Who gave them this authority? Besides, what good will a Reformation do us that removes only the smaller abuses, and leaves the great altogether untouched? It is not the humbler clergy, but the prelates and abbots who oppress us, and these the Ratisbon Convention leaves flourishing in their wealth and power. Nor does this Reform give us the smallest hope that we shall be protected in future from the manifold exactions of the Roman court. In condemning the lesser evils, does not the League sanction the greater?" Even Pallavicino has acknowledged that this judgement of the princes on the Ratisbon Reformation was just, when he says that "the physician in the cure of

²Pallavicino, lib. 2, cap. 11. Sleidan, bk. 4, p. 74. Fra-Paolo Sarpi, livr. 1, p. 67; Basle, 1738.

his patient ought to begin not with the small, but the great remedies.”

3

The legate had done well, and now the Pope, who saw that he must grasp the keys more firmly, or surrender them altogether, followed up with vigor the measures of Campeggio. Clement VII. wrote in urgent terms to Charles V., telling him that the Empire was in even greater danger from these audacious Germans than the tiara. Charles did not need this spur. He was sufficiently alive to what was due to him as emperor. This proposal of the princes to hold a Diet irrespective of the emperor's authority stung him to the quick.

The Pope's letter found the emperor at Burgos, the capital of Old Castile. The air of the place was not favorable to concessions to Lutheranism. Everything around Charles—a cathedral of unrivalled magnificence, the lordly priests by which it was served, the devotion of the Castilians, with other tokens of the pomp and power of Catholicism—must have inspired him with even more than his usual reverence for the old religion, and made the project of the princes appear in his eyes doubly a crime. He wrote in sharp terms to them, saying that it belonged to him as emperor to demand of the Pope that a Council should be convoked; that he and the Pope alone were the judges when it was a fitting time to convoke such an assembly, and that when he saw that a Council could be held with profit to Christendom he would ask the Pope to summon one; that, meanwhile, till a General Council should meet, it was their duty to acquiesce in the ecclesiastical settlement which had been made at Worms; that at that Diet all the matters which they proposed to bring again into discussion at Spire had been determined, and that to meet to discuss them over again was to unsettle them. In fine, he reminded them of the Edict of Worms against Luther, and called on them to put it in execution. He forbade the meeting of the Diet at Spire, under penalty of high treason and ban of the Empire. The princes eventually submitted, and thus the projected Diet, which had excited so great hopes on the one side and so great alarm on the other, never met. ⁴

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³Fra-Paolo Sarpi, livr. 1, p. 68. Pallavicino, lib. 2, cap. 11.

⁴Sleidan, bk. 4, pp. 75, 76. Pallavicino, lib. 2, cap. 10. Fra-Paolo Sarpi, livr. 1, pp. 69, 70.

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The issue of the affair was that the unity of Germany was broken. From this hour, there were a Catholic Diet and a Protestant Diet in the Empire- a Catholic Germany and a Protestant Germany. The rent was made by Campeggio, and what he did was endorsed and completed by Charles V. The Reformation was developing peacefully in the Empire; the majority of the Diet was on its side; the several States and cities were rallying to it; there was the promise that soon it would be seen advancing under the aegis of a united Fatherland: but this fair prospect was suddenly and fatally blighted by the formation of an Anti-Protestant League. The unity thus broken has never since been restored. It must not be overlooked that this was the doing of the Romanist party.

“What a deplorable event!” exclaims the reader. And truly it was. It had to be expiated by the wars, the revolutions, the political and religious strifes of three centuries. Christendom was entering on the peaceful and united rectification of the errors of ages-the removal of those superstitious beliefs which had poisoned the morals of the world, and furnished a basis for ecclesiastical and political despotisms. And, with a purified conscience, there would have come an enlarged and liberated intellect, the best patron of letters and art, of liberty and of industry. With the rise of these two hostile camps, the world’s destinies were fatally changed. Henceforward Protestantism must advance by way of the stake. But, lacking these many heroic deaths, these hundreds of thousands of martyrs, what a splendor would have been lacking to Protestantism!

The conferences at Ratisbon lasted a fortnight, and when at length they came to an end, the Archduke Ferdinand and the Papal legate journeyed together to Vienna. On the road thither, they came to an understanding as to the practical steps for carrying out the league. The sword must be unsheathed. Gaspard Tauber, of Vienna, whose crime was the circulating of Luther’s books, was among the first to suffer. An idea got abroad that he would recant. Two pulpits were erected in the churchyard of St. Stephen’s. From the one Tauber was to read his recantation, and from the other a priest was to magnify the act as a new trophy of the power of the Roman Church. Tauber rose in presence of the vast multitude assembled in the graveyard, who awaited in deep silence the first words of recantation. To their amazement he made a bolder confession of his faith than ever.

He was immediately dragged to execution, decapitated, and his body thrown into the fire and consumed. His Christian intrepidity on the scaffold made a deep impression on his townsmen. At Buda, in Hungary, a Protestant bookseller was burned with his books piled up around him. He was heard amid the flames proclaiming the joy with which he suffered for the sake of Christ. An inquisitor, named Reichler, traversed Wurtemberg, hanging Lutherans on the trees, and nailing the Reformed preachers to posts by the tongue, and leaving them to die on the spot, or set themselves free at the expense of self-mutilation, and the loss of that gift by which they had served Christ in the ministry of the Gospel. In the territories of the Archbishop of Salzburg, a Protestant who was being conducted to prison was released by two peasants, while his guards were carousing in an alehouse. The peasants were beheaded outside the walls of the city without form of trial. There was a Reign of Terror in Bavaria. It was not on those in humble life only that the storm fell; the magistrate on the bench, the baron in his castle found no protection from the persecutor. The country swarmed with spies, and friend dared not confide in friend.

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This fanatical rage extended to some parts of Northern Germany. The tragical fate of Henry van Zutphen deserves a short notice. Escaping from the monastery at Antwerp in 1523, when the converts Esch and Voes were seized and burned, he preached the Gospel for two years in Bremen. His fame as a preacher extending, he was invited to proclaim the Reformed doctrine to the uninstructed people of the Ditmarches country. He repaired thither, and had appeared only once in the pulpit, when the house in which he slept was surrounded at midnight by a mob, heated by the harangues of the prior of the Dominicans and the fumes of Hamburg beer. He was pulled out of bed, beaten with clubs, dragged on foot over many miles of a road covered with ice and snow, and finally thrown on a slow fire and burned.⁵ Such were the means which the “Ratisbon Reformers” adopted for repressing Protestantism, and upholding the old order of things. “The blood he is shedding,” exclaimed Luther,

⁵Sleidan, bk. 4, p. 75. Luth. Opp., lib. 19, p. 330. D’Aubigne, vol. 3, pp. 151-155; Glas., 1855.

on being told of these proceedings, “will choke the Pope at last, with his kings and kingdoms.”⁶

⁶Luther to Hausmann, 1524, p. 563.

Chapter 7: Luther's Views on the Sacrament and Image-Worship

New Friends-Philip, Landgrave of Hesse-Meeting between him and Melanchthon-Joins the Reformation-Duke Ernest, etc.-Knights of the Teutonic Order-Their Origin and History-Royal House of Prussia- Free Cities-Services to Protestantism-Division-Carlstadt Opposes Luther on the Sacrament-Luther's Early Views-Recoil -Essence of Paganism-Opus Operatum-Calvin and Zwingli's View-Carlstadt Leaves Wittemberg and goes to Orlamunde-Scene at the Inn at Jena- Luther Disputes at Orlamunde on Image-Worship-Carlstadt Quits Saxony-Death of the Elector Frederick

Picture: Carlstadt Accepting Luthers Challenge to Write against him

While its enemies were forming leagues and un-sheathing their swords against the Reformation, new friends were hastening to place themselves on its side. It was at this hour that some of the more powerful princes of Germany stepped out from the ranks of the Romanists, and inscribed the "evangel" on their banners, declaring that henceforward under this "sign" only would they fight. Over against the camp formed by Austria and Bavaria was pitched that of the Landgrave of Hesse and the free cities.

One day in June, 1524, a knightly cavalcade was passing along the high-road which traverses the plain that divides Frankfort from the Taunus mountains. The party were on their way to the games at Heidelberg. As they rode along, two solitary travelers on horseback were seen approaching. On coming nearer, they were recognised to be Philip Melanchthon and his friend. The knight at the head of the first party, dashing forward, placed himself by the side of the illustrious doctor, and begged him to turn his horse's head, and accompany him a short way on the road. The prince who accosted Melanchthon was the young Landgrave of Hesse. Philip of Hesse had felt the impulses of the times, and was inquiring whether it

[507] was not possible to discover a better way than that of Rome. He had been present at the Diet of Worms; had been thrilled by the address of Luther; he had begged an interview with him immediately after, and ever since had kept revolving the matter in his heart. A chance, as it seemed, had now thrown Melanchthon in his way. He opened his mind to him as he rode along by his side, and, in reply, the doctor gave the prince a clear and comprehensive outline of the Reformed doctrine. This oral statement Melanchthon supplemented, on his return to Wittemberg, by a “written epitome of the renovated doctrines of Christianity,” the study of which made the landgrave resolve to cast in his lot with Protestantism. He embraced it with characteristic ardour, for he did nothing by halves. He made the Gospel be preached in his dominions, and as he brought to the cause the whole energy of his character, and the whole influence of his position, he rendered it no ordinary services. In conflicts to come, his plume was often seen waving in the thick of the battle. ¹

About the same time, other princes transferred the homage of their hearts and the services of their lives to the same cause. Among these were Duke Ernest of Luneburg, who now began to promote the reformation of his States; the Elector of the Palatinate; and Frederick I. of Denmark, who, as Duke of Schleswig and Holstein, ordained that all under him should be free to worship God as their consciences might direct.

These accessions were followed by another, on which time has since set the print of vast importance. Its consequences continue to be felt down to our own days. The knight who now transferred his homage to the cause of Protestantism was the head of the house of Prussia, then Margrave of Brandenburg.

The chiefs of the now imperial house of Prussia were originally Burgraves of Nuremberg. They sold, as we have already said, this dignity, and the price they received for it enabled them to purchase the Margraveship of Brandenburg. In 1511, Albert, the then head of the house of Brandenburg, became Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. This was perhaps the most illustrious of all those numerous orders of religious knights, or monks, which were founded during

¹Camerarius, p. 94.

the frenzy of the Crusades,² in defense of the Christian faith against heathens and infidels. They wore a white cross as their badge. Albert, the present Grand Master, while attending the Diet at Nuremberg, had listened to the sermons of Osiander, and had begun to doubt the soundness of the Roman creed, and, along with that, the lawfulness of his vow as Grand Master of the Teutonic monks. He obtained an interview with Luther, and asked his advice. "Renounce your Grand-Mastership; dissolve the order," said the Reformer; "take a wife; and erect your quasi-religious domain into a secular and hereditary duchy." Albert, adopting the counsel of Luther, opened to himself and his family the road that at a future day was to conduct to the imperial crown. He renounced his order of monk-hood, professed the Reformed faith, married a princess of Denmark, and declared Prussia an hereditary duchy, doing homage for it to the crown of Poland. He was put under the ban of the Empire; but retained, nevertheless, possession of his dominions. In process of time this rich inheritance fell to the possession of the electoral branch of his family; all dependence on the crown of Poland was cast off; the duchy was converted into a kingdom, and the title of duke exchanged for the loftier one of king. The fortunes of the house continued to grow till at last its head took his place among the great sovereigns of Europe.³ Another and higher step awaited him. In 1870, at the close of the Franco-German war, the King of Prussia became Emperor of Germany.

In the rear of the princes, and in some instances in advance of them, came the free cities. We have spoken of their rise in a former chapter. They eminently prepared the soil for the reception of Protestantism. They were nurseries of art, cultivators of knowledge, and guardians of liberty. We have already seen that at Nuremberg, during the sittings of the Diet, and despite the presence of the legate of the Pope and the ambassador of the emperor, Protestant sermons were daily preached in the two cathedral churches; and when Campeggio threatened to apprehend and punish the preachers in the name of his master, the municipality spiritedly forbade him to touch a hair of their heads. Other towns followed the example of Nuremberg. The

²The order was instituted in A.D. 1190, and the first Master was chosen in the camp before Ptolemais. (Sleidan.)

³Robertson, Hist. Charles V., bk.

Municipal Diets of Ulm and Spire (1524) resolved that the clergy should be sustained in preaching the pure Gospel, and bound themselves by mutual promise to defend each other against any attempt to execute the Edict of Worms.

At the very moment that Protestantism was receiving these powerful accessions from without, a principle of weakness was being developed within. The Reformers, hitherto a united phalanx, began to be parted into two camps—the Lutheran and the Reformed. It is now that we trace the incipient rise of the two powerful parties which have continued, down to our day, to divide the Protestant world, and to retard the march of the Reformation.

[508] The difference was at first confined to two men. Luther and Carlstadt had combatted by the side of each other at Leipsic against Dr. Eck; unhappily they differed in their views on the Sacrament of the Supper, and began to do battle against each other. Few there are who can follow with equal steps the march of Truth, as she advances from the material and the symbolical to the position of a pure principle. Some lag behind, laying fully as much stress upon the symbol as upon the verity it contains; others outstrip Truth, as it were, by seeking to dissociate her from that organisation which God has seen to be necessary for her action upon the world. The fanatics, who arose at this stage of the Reformation, depreciated the Word and the Sacraments, and, in short, all outward ordinances, maintaining that religion was a thing exclusively of spiritual communion, and that men were to be guided by an inward light. Luther saw clearly that this theory would speedily be the destruction not of what was outward only in religion, but also of what was inward and spiritual. A recoil ensued in his sentiments. He not only paused in his career, he went back; and the retrogression which we henceforth trace in him was not merely a retrogression from the new mystics, but from his former self. The clearness and boldness which up till this time had characterised his judgment on theological questions now forsook him, and something of the old haze began to gather round him and cloud his mind.

At an earlier period of his career (1520), in his work entitled the *Babylonian Captivity*, he had expressed himself in terms which implied that the spiritual presence of Christ in the Sacrament was the only presence he recognised there, and that faith in Christ thus

present was the only thing necessary to enable one to participate in all the benefits of the Lord's Supper. This doctrine is in nowise different from that which was afterwards taught on this head by Calvin, and which Luther so zealously opposed in the case of Zwingli and the theologians of the Swiss Reformation. Unhappily, Luther having grasped the true idea of the Lord's Supper, again lost it. He was unable to retain permanent possession of the ground which he had occupied for a moment, as it were; he fell back to the old semi-materialistic position, to the arrestment of his own career, and the dividing of the Protestant army.

It is a grand principle in Protestantism that the ordinances of the Church become to us "effectual means" of salvation, not from "any virtue in them," or "in him that administers them," but solely by the "blessing of God," and the "working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them." This draws a clear line of distinction between the institutions of the Reformed Church and the rites of Paganism and Romanism. It was a doctrine of Paganism that there was a magical or necromantic influence in all its observances, in virtue of which a purifying change was effected upon the soul of the worshipper. This idea was the essence of Paganism. In the sacrifice, in the lustral water, in every ceremony of its ritual, there resided an invisible but potent power, which of itself renewed or transformed the man who did the rite, or in whose behalf it was done. This doctrine descended to Romanism. In all its priests, and in all its rites, there was lodged a secret, mysterious, superhuman virtue, which regenerated and sanctified men. It was called the "opus operatum," because, according to this theory, salvation came simply by the performance of the rite—the "doing of the work." It was not the Spirit that regenerated man, nor was faith on his part necessary in order to his profiting; the work was accomplished by the sole and inherent potency of the rite. This doctrine converts the ordinances of the Gospel into spells, and makes their working simply magical.

Luther was on the point of fully emancipating himself from this belief. As regards the doctrines of Christianity, he did fully emancipate himself from it. His doctrine of justification by faith alone implied the total renunciation of this idea; but, as regards the Sacraments, he did not so fully vindicate his freedom from the old beliefs. With reference to the Supper, he lost sight of the

grand master-truth which led to the emancipation of himself and Christendom from monkish bondage. He could see that faith alone in Christ's obedience and death could avail for the justification, the pardon, and the eternal salvation of the sinner; and yet he could not see that faith alone in Christ, as spiritually present in the Supper, could avail for the nourishment of the believer. Yet the latter is but another application of Luther's great cardinal doctrine of justification by faith,

The shock Luther received from the extremes to which the Anabaptists proceeded in good part accounts for this result. He saw, as he thought, the whole of Christianity about to be spiritualised, and to lose itself a second time in the mazes of mysticism. He retreated, therefore, into the doctrine of impanation or consubstantiation, which the Dominican, John of Paris, broached in the end of the thirteenth century. According to this tenet, the body and blood of Christ are really and corporeally present in the elements, but the substance of the bread and wine also remains.

[509] Luther held that in, under, or along with the elements was Christ's very body; so that, after consecration, the bread was both bread and the flesh of Christ, and the wine both wine and the blood of Christ. He defended his belief by a literal interpretation of the words of institution, "This is my body." "I have undergone many hard struggles," we find him saying, "and would fain have forced myself into believing a doctrine whereby I could have struck a mighty blow at the Papacy. But the text of Scripture is too potent for me; I am a captive to it, and cannot get away."

Carlstadt refused to bow to the authority of the great doctor on this point. He agreed with the Luther of 1520, not with the Luther of 1524. Carlstadt held that there was no corporeal presence of Christ in the elements; that the consecration effects no change upon the bread and wine; that the Supper is simply commemorative of the death of Christ, and nourishes the communicant by vividly representing that transaction to his faith. Carlstadt's views differed widely from those of Luther, but they fell short of the doctrine of the Supper, as it came afterwards to be settled in the controversies that ensued, and finally held by Zwingle and Calvin.

Carlstadt finding himself fettered, as may well be conceived, in the declaration of his opinions at Wittemberg, sought a freer stage

on which to ventilate them. Early in 1524 he removed to Orlamunde, and there began to propagate his views. We do not at this stage enter on the controversy. It will come before us afterwards, when greater champions than Carlstadt shall have stepped into the arena, and when accordingly we can review, with much greater profit and advantage, the successive stages of this great war, waged unhappily within the camp of the Reformation.

One passage at arms we must however record. No longer awed by Luther's presence, Carlstadt's boldness and zeal waxed greater every day. Not content with opposing the Wittemberg doctrine of the Supper, he attacked Luther on the subject of images. The old leaven of monkhood—the strength of which was shown in the awful struggles he had to undergo before he found his way to the Cross—was not wholly purged out of the Reformer. Luther not only tolerated the presence of images in the churches, like Zwingle; for the sake of the weak; he feared to displace them even when the worshippers desired their removal. He believed they might be helpful. Carlstadt denounced these tendencies and weaknesses as Popery. The minds of the men of Orlamunde were getting inflamed by the violence of his harangues; commotions were rising, and the Elector sent Luther to Orlamunde to smooth the troubled waters. A little reflection might have taught Frederick that his presence was more likely to bring on a tempest; for the Reformer was beginning to halt in that equanimity and calm strength which, up till this time, he had been able to exercise in the face of opposition.

Luther on his way to Orlamünde traveled by Jena, where he arrived on the 21st August, 1524. From this city he wrote to the Elector and Duke John, exhorting them to employ their power in curbing that fanatical spirit, which was beginning to give birth to acts of violence. The exhortation was hardly needed, seeing he was at that moment on a mission from the Elector for that very end. It shows, however, that in Luther's opinion the Reformation ran more risk from the madness of the fanatic than from the violence of the persecutor: "The fanatic," he said in his letter, "hates the Word of God, and exclaims, 'Bible, Bubel, Babel!'"⁴ What kind of tree is that which bears such fruit as the breaking open of churches and

⁴Sleidan, bk. 5, pp. 98, 99. 4 Seckendorf. lib. 1, sec. 61, p. 304.

cloisters, and the burning of images and saints? Christians ought to use the Word, not the hand. The New Testament method of driving out the devil is to convert the heart, and then the devil falls and all his works.”⁵

Next day he preached against insurrectionary tumults, iconoclast violence, and the denial of the real presence in the Eucharist. Afterwards, as he was seated at dinner with the pastor of Jena and the city functionaries, a paper was handed in to him from Carlstadt. “Let him come in,” said Luther. Carlstadt entered. “You attacked me today,” said Carlstadt to the Reformer, “as an author of sedition and assassination; it is false!” “I did not name you,” rejoined Luther; “nevertheless, if the cap fits you, you may put it on.” “I am able to show,” said Carlstadt, “that you have taught contradictions on the subject of the Eucharist.” “Prove your assertion,” rejoined Luther. “I am willing to dispute publicly with you,” replied Carlstadt, “at Wittemberg or at Erfurt, if you will grant me a safe-conduct.”

[510] “Never fear that,” said Luther. “You tie my hands and my feet and then you strike me!” exclaimed Carlstadt with warmth. “Write against me,” said Luther. “I would,” said the other, “if I knew you to be in earnest.” “Here,” exclaimed Luther, “take that in token of my earnestness,” holding out a gold florin. “I willingly accept the gage,” said Carlstadt. Then holding it out to the company, “Ye are my witnesses,” said he, “that this is my authority to write against Martin Luther.” He bent the florin and put it into his purse. He then extended his hand to Luther, who pledged him in some wine. “The more vigorously you assault me,” said Luther, “the better you will please me.” “It shall not be my fault,” answered Carlstadt, “if I fail.” They drank to one another, and again shaking hands, Carlstadt withdrew.

The details of this interview are found only in the records of the party adverse to the Reformer, and Luther has charged them with gross exaggeration.

From Jena, Luther continued his journey, and arrived at Orlamunde in the end of August. The Reformer himself has given us no account of his disputation with Carlstadt. The account which historians commonly follow is that of Reinhard, a pastor of Jena,

⁵Seckendorf. lib. 1, sec. 61, p. 304.

and an eye-witness. Its accuracy has been challenged by Luther, and, seeing Reinhard was a friend of Carlstadt, it is not improbably colored. But making every allowance, Luther appears to have been too much in haste to open this breach in the Protestant army, and he took the responsibility too lightly, forgetful of the truth which Melchior Adam has enunciated, and which experience has a thousand times verified, "that a single spark will often suffice to wrap in flames a whole forest." As regards the argument Luther won no victory; he found the waters ruffled, and he lashed them into tempest.

Assembling the town council and the citizens of Orlamunde, Luther was addressing them when Carlstadt entered. Walking up to Luther, Carlstadt saluted him: "Dear doctor, if you please, I will induct you." "You are my antagonist," Luther replied, "I have pledged you with a florin." "I shall ever be your antagonist," rejoined the other, "so long as you are an antagonist to God and His Word." Luther on this insisted that Carlstadt should withdraw, seeing that he could not transact the business on which he had come at the Elector's command, in his presence. Cartstadt refused, on the ground that it was a free meeting, and if he was in fault why should his presence be feared? On this Luther turned to his attendant, and ordered him to put-to the horses at once, for he should immediately leave the town, whereupon Carlstadt withdrew.

Being now alone with the men of Orlamunde, Luther proceeded with the business the Elector had sent him to transact, which was to remove their iconoclast prejudices, and quiet the agitation of their city. "Prove to me," said Luther, opening the discussion, "prove to me by Scripture that images ought to be destroyed."

"Mr. Doctor," rejoined a councillor, "do you grant me thus much—that Moses knew God's commandments?" Then opening a Bible he read these words: "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or the likeness of anything." This was as much as to say, Prove to me from Scripture that images ought to be worshipped.

"That passage refers to images of idols only," responded Luther. "If I have hung up in my room a crucifix which I do not worship, what harm can it do me? "

This was Zwingle's ground; but Luther was not yet able fully to occupy it.

“I have often,” said a shoemaker, “taken off my hat to an image in a room or on the road; to do so is an act of idolatry, which takes from God the glory that is due to Him alone.”

“Because of their being abused, then,” replied Luther, “we ought to destroy women, and pour out wine into the streets.”

“No,” was the reply; “these are God’s creatures, which we are not commanded to destroy.”

It is easy to see that images were not things of mere indifference to Luther. He could not divest himself of a certain veneration for them. He feared to put forth his hand and pull them down, nor would he permit those that would. Immediately on the close of the discussion he left Orlamunde, amid very emphatic marks of popular disfavor. It was the one field, of the many on which he contended, from which he was fated to retire with dishonor.

Carlstadt did not stop here. He began to throw his influence into the scale of the visionaries, and to declaim bitterly against Luther and the Lutherans. This was more than the Elector Frederick could endure. He ordered Carlstadt to quit his dominions; and the latter, obeying, wandered southward, in the direction of Switzerland, propagating wherever he came his views on the Supper; but venting, still more zealously and loudly, his hatred of Luther, whom he accused as the author of all his calamities. The aged Elector, at whose orders he had quitted Saxony, was beginning to fear that the Reformation was advancing too far. His faith in the Reformed doctrine continued to grow, and was only the stronger the nearer he came to his latter end, which was now not far off; but the political signs dismayed him. The unsettling of men’s minds, and the many new and wild notions that were vented, and which were the necessary concomitants of the great revolution in progress, caused him alarm. The horizon was darkening all round, but the good Frederick went to his grave in peace, and saw not those tempests which were destined to shake the world at the birth of Protestantism.

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All was peace in the chamber where Frederick the Wise breathed his last. On the 4th of May (1525) he dictated to an amanuensis his last instructions to his brother John, who was to succeed him, and who was then absent with the army in Thuringia. He charged him to deal kindly and tenderly with the peasantry, and to remit the duties on wine and beer. “Be not afraid,” he said, “Our Lord God

will richly and graciously compensate us in other ways.”⁶ In the evening Spalatin entered the prince’s apartment. “It is right,” said his old master, a smile lighting up his face, “that you should come to see a sick man.” His chair was rolled to the table, and placing his hand in Spalatin’s, he unburdened his mind to him touching the Reformation. His words showed that the clouds that distressed him had rolled away. “The hand of God,” said he, “will guide all to a happy issue.”

On the morning of the following day he received the Sacrament in both kinds. The act was witnessed by his domestics, who stood around dissolved in tears. Imploring their forgiveness, if in anything he had offended then, he bade them all farewell. A will which had been prepared some years before, and in which he had confided his soul to the “Mother of God,” was now brought forth and burned, and another dictated, in which he placed his hopes solely on “the merits of Christ.” This was the last of his labours that pertained to earth; and now he gave all his thoughts to his departure, which was near. Taking into his hand a small treatise on spiritual consolation, which Spalatin had prepared for his use, he essayed to read; but the task was too much for him. Drawing near his couch, his chaplain recited some promises from the Word of God, of which the Elector, in his latter years, had been a diligent and devout student. A serenity and refreshment of soul came along with the words; and at five of the afternoon he departed so peacefully, that it was only by bending over him that his physician saw he had ceased to breathe.⁷

⁶Seckendorf, lib.2, sec. 2

⁷Seckendorf, lib.2, sec. 2

Chapter 8: War of the Peasants

A New Danger-German Peasantry-Their Oppressions-These grow Worse-The Reformation Seeks to Alleviate them-The Outbreak-The Reformation Accused-The Twelve Articles-These Rejected by the Princes-Luther's Course-His Admonitions to the Clergy and the Peasantry-Rebellion in Suabia-Extends to Franconia, etc.-The Black Forest-Peasant Army-Ravages-Slaughterings-Count Louis of Helfenstein-Extends to the Rhine-Universal Terror-Army of the Princes-Insurrection Arrested-Weinsberg-Retaliations-Thomas Munzer-Lessons of the Outbreak

Picture: Death of Frederick the Wise Elector of Saxony

Picture: The Chartreuse of Pavia

The sun of the Reformation was mounting into the sky, and promising to fill the world with light. In a moment a cloud gathered, overspread the firmament, and threatened to quench the young day in the darkness of a horrible night.

The troubles that now arose had not been foreseen by Luther. That the Pope, whom the Reformation would despoil of the triple crown, with all the spiritual glory and temporal power attendant thereon, should anathematise it; that the emperor, whose scheme of policy and ambition it thwarted, should make war against it; and that the numerous orders of the mitre and the cowl should swell the opposition; was to be expected; but that the people, from whose eyes it was to tear the bandage of spiritual darkness, and from whose arms it was to rend the fetters of temporal bondage, should seek to destroy it, had not entered into Luther's calculations. Yet now a terrible blow-the greatest the Reformation had as yet sustained-came upon it, not from the Pope, nor from the emperor, but from the people.

The oppressions of the German peasantry had been growing for centuries. They had long since been stripped of the rude privileges their fathers enjoyed. They could no longer roam their forests at will, kill what game they pleased, and build their hut on whatever

spot taste or convenience dictated. Not only were they robbed of their ancient rights, they were compelled to submit to new and galling restrictions. Tied to their native acres, in many instances, they were compelled, to expend their sweat in tilling the fields, and spin their blood in maintaining the quarrels of their masters. To temporal oppression was added ecclesiastical bondage. The small portion of earthly goods which the baron had left them, the priest wrung from them by spiritual threats, thus filling their cup of suffering to the brim. The power of contrast came to embitter their lot. While one part of Germany was sinking into drudgery and destitution, another part was rising into affluence and power. The free towns were making rapid strides in the acquisition of liberty, and their example taught the peasants the way to achieve a like independence-by combination. Letters and arts were awakening thought and prompting to effort. Last of all came the Reformation, and that great power vastly widened the range of human vision, by teaching the essential equality of all men, and weakening the central authority, or key-stone in the arch of Europe-namely, the Papacy. ¹

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It was now evident to many that the hour had fully come when these wrongs, which dated from ancient times, but which had been greatly aggravated by recent events, must be redressed. The patience of the sufferers was exhausted; they had begun to feel their power; and if their fetters were not loosed by their masters, they would be broken by themselves, and with a blind rage and a destructive fury proportioned to the ignorance in which they had been kept, and the degradation into which they had been sunk. In the words of an eloquent writer and philosopher who flourished in an after-age, “they would break their chains on the heads of their oppressors.” ²

Mutterings of the gathering storm had already been heard. Premonitory insurrections and tumults had broken out in several of the German countries. The close of the preceding century had been marked by the revolt of the Boers in Holland, who paraded the country under a flag, on which was blazoned a gigantic cheese. The sixteenth century opened amid similar disturbances. Every two or three years there came a “new league,” followed by a “popular in-

¹Robertson, *Hist. Charles V.*, bk. 4, p. 150.

²Sir James Mackintosh, in his *Vindiciae Gallicoe*.

surrection.” These admonished the princes, civil and spiritual, that they had no alternative, as regarded the future, but reformation or revolution. Spire, Wurtemberg, Carinthia, and Hungary were the successive theaters of these revolts, which all sprang from one cause—oppressive labor, burdens which were growing ever the heavier, and privileges which were waxing ever the narrower. The poor people, dehumanised by ignorance, knew but of one way of righting them-selves—demolishing the castles, wasting the lands, spoiling the treasures, and in some instances slaying the persons of their oppressors.

It was at this hour that the Reformation stepped upon the stage. It came with its healing virtue to change the hearts and tame the passions of men, and so to charm into repose the insurrectionary spirit which threatened to devastate the world. It accomplished its end so far; it would have accomplished it completely, it would have turned the hearts of the princes to their subjects, and the hearts of the people to their rulers, had it been suffered to diffuse itself freely among both classes. Even as it was, it brought with it a pause in these insurrectionary violences, which had begun to be common. But soon its progress was arrested by force, and then it was accused as the author of those evils which it was not permitted to cure. “See,” said Duke George of Saxony, “what an abyss Luther has opened. He has reviled the Pope; he has spoken evil of dignities; he has filled the minds of the people with lofty notions of their own importance; and by his doctrines he has sown the seeds of universal disorder and anarchy. Luther and his Reformation are the cause of the Peasant-war.” Many besides Duke George found it convenient to shut their eyes to their own misdeeds, and to make the Gospel the scape-goat of calamities of which they themselves were the authors. Even Erasmus upbraided Luther thus—“We are now reaping the fruits that you have sown.”

Some show of reason was given to these accusations by Thomas Munzer, who imported a religious element into this deplorable outbreak. Munzer was a professed disciple of the Reformation, but he held it to be unworthy of a Christian to be guided by any objective authority, even the Word of God. He was called to “liberty,” and the law or limit of that “liberty” was his own inward light. Luther, he affirmed, by instituting ordinances and forms, had established

another Popedom; and Munzer disliked the Popedom of Wittemberg even more than he did the Popedom of Rome. The political opinions of Munzer partook of a like freedom with his religious ones. To submit to princes was to serve Belials. We have no superior but God. The Gospel taught that all men were equal; and this he interpreted, or rather misinterpreted, into the democratic doctrine of equality of rank, and community of goods. "We must mortify the body," said he, "by fasting and simple clothing, look gravely, speak little, and wear a long beard." "These and such-like things, says Sleidan, "he called the cross."³ Such was the man who, girding on "the sword of Gideon," put himself at the head of the revolted peasantry. He inoculated them with his own visionary spirit, and taught them to aim at a liberty of which their own judgments or passions were the rule.

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The peasants put their demands (January, 1525) into twelve articles. Considering the heated imaginations of those who penned them, these articles were reasonable and moderate. The insurgents craved restitution of certain free domains which had belonged to their ancestors, and certain rights of hunting and fishing which they themselves had enjoyed, but which had been taken from them. They demanded, further, a considerable mitigation of taxes, which burdened them heavily, and which were of comparatively recent imposition. They headed their claim of rights with the free choice of their ministers; and it was a further peculiarity of this document, that each article in it was supported by a text from Scripture.⁴

An enlightened policy would have conceded these demands in the main. Wise rulers would have said. "Let us make these minions free of the earth, of the waters, and of the forests, as their fathers were; from serfs let us convert them into free men. It is better that their skin should enrich, and their valor defend our territories, than that their blood should water them." Alas! there was not wisdom enough in the age to adopt such a course. Those on whom these claims were pressed said, "No," with their hands upon their swords.

The vessel of the Reformation was now passing between the Scylla of established despotism and the Charybdis of popular law-

³Sleidan, bk. 5, p. 83.

⁴Ibid., p. 90.

lessness. It required rare skill to steer it aright. Shall Luther ally his movement with that of the peasantry? We can imagine him under some temptation to essay ruling the tempest, in the hope of directing its fury to the overthrow of a system which he regarded as the parent of all the oppressions and miseries that filled Christendom, and had brought on at last this mighty convulsion. One less spiritual in mind, and with less faith in the inherent vitalities of the Reformation might have been seduced into linking his cause with this tempest. Luther shrank from such a course. He knew that to ally so holy a cause as the Reformation with a movement at best but political, would be to profane it; and that to borrow the sword of men in its behalf was the sure way to forfeit the help of that mightier sword which alone could will such a battle. The Reformation had its own path and its own weapons, to which if it adhered, it would assuredly triumph in the end. It would correct all wrongs, would explode all errors, and pacify all feuds, but only by propagating its own principles, and diffusing its own spirit among men. Luther, therefore, stood apart.

But this enabled him all the more, at the right moment, to come in effectively between the oppressor and the oppressed, and to tell a little of the truth to both. ⁵ Turning to the princes he reminded them of the long course of tyranny which they and their fathers had exercised over the poor people. To the bishops he spoke yet more plainly. They had hidden the light of the Gospel from the people; they had substituted cheats and fables for the doctrines of Revelation; they had lettered men by unholy vows, and fleeced them by unrighteous impositions, and now they were reaping as they had sowed. To be angry at the peasants, he told them, was to be guilty of the folly of the man who vents his passion against the rod with which he is struck instead of the hand that wields it. The peasantry was but the instrument in the hand of God for their chastisement.

Luther next addressed himself to the insurgents. He acknowledged that their complaints were not without cause, and thus he showed that he had a heart which could sympathize with them in their miseries, but he faithfully told them that they had taken the wrong course to remedy them. They would never mitigate their lot by rebellion; they must exercise Christian submission, and wait the

⁵Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 3, pp. 7, 8.

gradual but certain rectification of their individual wrongs, and those of society at large, by the Divine, healing power of the Gospel. He sought to enforce his admonition by his own example. He had not taken the sword; he had relied on the sole instrumentality of the Gospel, and they themselves knew how much it had done in a very few years to shake the power of an oppressive hierarchy, with the political despotism that upheld it, and to ameliorate the condition of Christendom. No army could have accomplished half the work in double the time. He implored them to permit this process to go on. It is preachers, not soldiers-the Gospel, not rebellion, that is to benefit the world. And he warned them that if they should oppose the Gospel in the name of the Gospel, they would only rivet the yoke of their enemies upon their neck. ⁶

The courage of the Reformer is not less conspicuous than his wisdom, in speaking thus plainly to two such parties at such an hour. But Luther had but small thanks for his fidelity. The princes accused him of throwing his shield over rebellion, because he refused to pronounce an unqualified condemnation of the peasantry; and the peasants blamed him as truckling to the princes, because he was not wholly with the insurrection. Posterity has judged otherwise. At this, as at every other crisis, Luther acted with profound moderation and wisdom. His mediation failed, however, and the storm now burst.

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The first insurrectionary cloud rolled up in Suabia, from beside the sources of the Danube. It made its appearance in the summer of 1524. The insurrectionary spirit ran like wildfire along the Danube, kindling the peasantry into revolt, and firing the towns with tumults, seditions, and terrors. By the end of the year Thuringia, Franconia, and part of Saxony were in a blaze. When the spring of 1525 opened, the conflagration spread wider still. It was now that the "twelve articles," to which we have referred above, were published, and became the standard for the insurgents to rally round. John Muller, of Bulbenbach, traversed the region of the Black Forest, attired in a red gown and a red cap, preceded by the tricolor-red, black, and white-and followed by a herald, who read aloud the "twelve articles," and demanded the adherence of the inhabitants of the districts through which he passed. The peasant army that

⁶Sleidan, bk. 5, pp 90-95. D'Aubigne, vol. 3, pp. 185, 186.

followed him was continually reinforced by new accessions. Towns too feeble to resist these formidable bands, opened their gates at their approach, and not a few knights and barons, impelled by terror, joined their ranks.

The excitement of the insurgents soon grew into fury. Their march was no longer tumultuous simply, it had now become destructive and desolating. The country in their rear resembled the track over which all invading and plundering host had passed. Fields were trampled down, barns and storehouses were rifled, the castles of the nobility were demolished, and the convents were burned to the ground.⁷

More cruel violences than these did this army of insurgents inflict. They now began to dye their path with the blood of unhappy victims. They slaughtered mercilessly those who fell into their power. On Easter Day (April 16th, 1525) they surprised Weinsberg, in Suabia. Its garrison they condemned to death. The fate of its commander,

Count Louis of Helfenstein, was heart-rending in the extreme. His wife, the natural daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, threw herself at the feet of the insurgents, and, holding her infant son in her arms, besought them, with a flood of tears, to spare her husband.⁸ It was in vain. They lowered their pikes, and ran him through.⁹ He fell pierced by innumerable wounds.

It seemed as if this conflagration was destined to rage till it had devoured all Christendom; as if the work of destruction would go on till all the fences of order were torn down, and all the symbols of authority defaced, and pause in its career only when it had issued in a universal democracy, in which neither rank nor property would be recognised. It extended on the west to the Rhine, where it stirred into tumult the towns of Spire, Worms, and Cologne, and infected the Palatinate with its fever of sanguinary vengeance. It invaded Alsace and Lorraine. It convulsed Bavaria, and Wurtemberg as far as the Tyrol. Its area extended from Saxony to the Alps. Bishops and nobles fled before it. The princes, taken, by surprise, were

⁷Hist. Charles V., bk. 4, p. 151.

⁸Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 4, p. 9.

⁹Sleidan, bk. 4, p. 80.

without combination and without spirit,¹⁰ and, to use the language of Scripture, were “chased as the rolling thing before the whirlwind.”

But soon they recovered from their stupor, and got together their forces. Albert, Count of Mansfeld, was the first to take the field, He was joined, with characteristic spirit and gallantry, by Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, who was soon followed by John, Elector of Saxony, and Henry, Duke of Brunswick, who all joined their forces to oppose the rebel boors. Had the matter rested with the Popish princes, the rebellion would have raged without resistance. On the 15th May, 1525, the confederate army came upon the rebel camp at Frankenhausen, where Munzer presided. Finding the rebels poorly armed, and posted behind a miserable barricade of a few wagons, they sent a messenger with an offer of pardon, on condition of laying down their arms. On Munzer’s advice, the messenger was put to death. Both sides now prepared for battle. The leader of the peasant army, Munzer, addressed them in an enthusiastic and inflammatory harangue, bidding them not fear the army of tyrants they were about to engage; that the sword of the Lord and of Gideon would fight for them; and that they would this day experience a like miraculous deliverance as the Israelites at the Red Sea, as David when he encountered Goliath, and Jonathan when he attacked the garrison of the Philistines. “Be not afraid,” said he, “of their great guns, for in my coat will I catch all the bullets which they shall shoot at you. See ye not how gracious God is unto us? Lift up your eyes, and see that rainbow in the clouds; for, seeing we have the same painted on our banner, God plainly declares by that representation which he shows us from on high that he will stand by us in the battle, and that he will utterly destroy our enemies. Fall on them courageously.”¹¹

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Despite this assurance of victory, the rebel host, at the first onset, fled in the utmost confusion. Munzer was among the first to make his escape. He took refuge in a house near the gate, where he was discovered after the battle, hid in the garret. He was committed to the custody of Duke George. In this encounter 5,000 of the peasantry were slain, and thus the confederates were at liberty to

¹⁰Ibid., p. 81.

¹¹Sleidan bk. 5, pp. 85, 86. Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 4, pp. 9.10.

move their forces into Franconia, where the insurrection still raged with great fury. The insurgents here burned above 200 castles, besides noblemen's houses and monasteries. They took the town of Wirtzburg, and besieged the castle; but Trusches coming upon them charged, discomfited, and put them to flight.

[518] Luther raised his voice again, but this time to pronounce an unqualified condemnation on a movement which, from a demand for just rights, had become a war of pillage and murder. He called on all to gird on the sword and resist it. The confederate princes made George von Trusches general of their army. Advancing by the side of the Lake of Constance, and dividing his soldiers into three bodies, Trusches attacked the insurgents with vigor. Several battles were fought, towns and fortresses were besieged; the peasantry contended with a furious bravery, knowing that they must conquer or endure a terrible revenge; but the arms of the princes triumphed. The campaign of this summer sufficed to suppress this formidable insurrection; but a terrible retaliation did the victors inflict upon the fanaticised hordes. They slaughtered them by tens of thousands on the battle-field; they cut them down as they fled; and not unfrequently did they dispatch in cold blood those who had surrendered on promise of pardon. The lowest estimate of the number that perished is 50,000, other accounts raise it to 100,000. When we consider the wide area over which the insurrection extended, and the carnage with which it was suppressed, we shall probably be of opinion that the latter estimate is nearer the truth.

A memorable vengeance was inflicted on Weinsberg, the scene of the death of Count Helfenstein. His murderers were apprehended and executed. The death of one of them was singularly tragic. He was tied to the stake with a chain, that was long enough to permit him to run about. Trusches and other persons of quality then fetched wood, and, strewing it all about, they kindled it into a cruel blaze. As the wretched man bounded wildly round and round amid the blazing faggots, the princes stood by and made sport of his tortures.¹² The town itself was burned to the ground. Munzer, the ecclesiastical leader, who had fired the peasantry by harangues, by portents, by assurances that their enemies would be miraculously destroyed,

¹²Sleidan, bk. 4, p. 81.

and by undertaking “to catch all the bullets in his sleeve,”¹³ after witnessing the failure of his enterprise, was taken and decapitated. Prior to execution he was taken before George, Duke of Saxony, and Landgrave Philip. On being asked why he had misled so many poor people to their ruin, he replied that “he had done only his duty.” The landgrave was at pains to show him that sedition and rebellion are forbidden in the Scriptures, and that Christians are not at liberty to avenge their wrongs by their own private authority. To this he was silent. On the rack he shrieked and laughed by turns; but when about to die he openly acknowledged his error and crimes. By way of example his head was stuck upon a pole in the open fields.¹⁴

Such horrible ending had the insurrection of the peasants. Ghastly memorials marked the provinces where this tempest had passed; fields wasted, cities overturned, castles and dwellings in ruins, and, more piteous still, corpses dangling from the trees, or gathered in heaps in the fields. The gain remained with Rome. The old worship was in some places restored, and the yoke of feudal bondage was more firmly riveted than before upon the necks of the people.

Nevertheless, the outbreak taught great lessons to the world, worth a hundredfold all the sufferings endured, if only they had been laid to heart. The peasant-war illustrated the Protestant movement by showing how widely it differed from Romanism, in both its origin and its issues. The insurrection did not manifest itself, or in but the mildest type, at Wittemberg and in the places permeated by the Wittemberg movement. When it touched ground which the Reformation had occupied, it became that instant powerless. It lacked air to fan it; it found no longer inflammable materials to kindle into a blaze. The Gospel said to this wasting conflagration, “Thus far, but no farther.” Could any man doubt that if Bavaria and the neighboring provinces had been in the same condition with Saxony, there would have been no peasant-war?

This outbreak taught the age, moreover, that Protestantism could no more be advanced by popular violence than it could be suppressed by aristocratic tyranny. It was independent of both; it must advance

¹³Luth. Opp., lib. 19, p. 297. D’Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 194

¹⁴Sleidan, bk. 5, p. 87.

by its own inherent might along its own path. In fine, this terrible outbreak gave timely warning to the world of what the consequences would be of suppressing the Reformation. It showed that underneath the surface of Christendom there was an abyss of evil principles and fiendish passions, which would one day break through and rend society in pieces, unless they were extinguished by a Divine influence. Munzer and his “inward light” was but the precursor of Voltaire and the “illuminati” of his school. The peasants’ war of 1525 was the first opening of “the fountains of the great deep.” The “Terror” was first seen stalking through Germany. It slumbered for two centuries while the religious and political power of Europe was undergoing a process of slow emasculation. Then the “Terror” again awoke, and the blasphemies, massacres, and wars of the French Revolution overwhelmed Europe.

Chapter 9: The Battle of Pavia and its Influence on Protestantism [519]

The Papacy Entangles itself with Earthly Interests-Protestantism stands Alone-Monarchy and the Popedom-Which is to Rule?-The Conflict a Defence in Protestantism-War between the Emperor and Francis I—Expulsion of the French from Italy-Battle of Pavia-Capture and Captivity of Francis I.-Charles V. at the Head of Europe- Protestantism to be Extirpated-Luther Marries-The Nuns of Nimptsch-Catherine von Bora-Antichrist about to be Born-What Luther's Marriage said to Rome

Picture: Cardinal Wolsey

There was one obvious difference between that movement of which Rome was the head-quarters, and that of which Wittemberg was the center. The Popedom mixed itself up with the politics of Europe; Protestantism, on the other hand, stood apart, and refused to ally itself with earthly confederacies. The consequence was that the Papacy had to shape its course to suit the will of those on whom it leaned. It rose and fell with the interests with which it had cast in its lot. The loss of a battle or the fall of a statesman would, at times, bring it to the brink of ruin. Protestantism, on the other hand, was free to hold its own course and to develop its own principles. The fall of monarchs and the changes in the political world gave it no uneasiness. Instead of fixing its gaze on the troubled ocean around it, its eye was lifted to heaven.

At this hour intrigues, ambitions, and wars were rife all round Protestantism. The Kings of Spain and France were striving with one another for the possession of Italy. The Pope thought, of course, that he had a better right than either to be master in that country. He was jealous of both monarchs, and shaped his policy so as to make the power of the one balance and check that of the other. He hoped to be able one day to drive both out of the peninsula, if not by arms, yet by arts; but till that day should come, his safety lay in appearing

to be the friend of both, and in taking care that the one should not be very much stronger than the other. All three—the Emperor, the King of France, and the Pope—in whatever else they differed, were the enemies of the Reformation; and had they united their arms they would have been strong enough, in all reckoning of human chances, to put down the Protestant movement. But their dynastic ambitions, fomented largely by the personal piques and crafty and ambitious projects of the men around them, kept them at almost perpetual feud. Each aspired to be the first man of his time. The Pope was still dreaming of restoring to the Papal See the supremacy which it possessed in the days of Gregory VII. and Innocent III., and of dictating to both Charles and Francis. These sovereigns, on the other hand, were determined not to let go the superiority which they had at last achieved over the tiara. The struggle of monarchy to keep what it had got, of the tiara to regain what it had lost, and of all three to be uppermost, filled their lives with disquiet, their kingdoms with misery, and their age with war. But these rivalries were a wall of defense around that Divine principle which was growing up into majestic stature in a world shaken by the many furious storms that were raging on it.

Scarce had the young emperor Charles V. thrown down the gage of battle to Protestantism, when these tempests broke in from many quarters. He had just fulminated the edict which consigned Luther to destruction, and was drawing his sword to execute it, when a quarrel broke out between himself and Francis I. The French army, crossing the Pyrenees, overran Navarre and entered Castile. The emperor hastened back to Spain to take measures for the defense of his kingdom. The war, thus begun, lasted till 1524, and ended in the expulsion of the French from Milan and Genoa, where they had been powerful ever since the days of Charles VIII. Nor did hostilities end here. The emperor, indignant at the invasion of his kingdom, and wishing to chastise his rival on his own soil, sent his army into France. The chivalry of Francis I., and the patriotic valor of his subjects, drove back the invaders. But the French king, not content with having rid himself of the soldiers of Spain, would chastise the emperor in his turn. He followed the Spanish army into Italy, and sought to recover the cities and provinces whereof he had recently been despoiled, and which were all the dearer to him

that they were situated in a land to which he was ever exceedingly desirous of stretching his scepter, but from which he was so often compelled, to his humiliation, again to draw it back.

The winter of 1525 beheld the Spanish and French armies face to face under the walls of Pavia. The place was strongly fortified, and had held out against the French for now two months, although Francis I. had employed in its reduction all the engineering expedients known to the age. Despite the obstinacy of the defenders, it was now evident that the town must fall. The Spanish garrison, reduced to extremity, sallied forth, and joined battle, with the besiegers with all the energy of despair.

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This day was destined to bring with it a terrible reverse in the fortunes of Francis I. Its dawn saw him the first warrior of his age; its evening found him in the abject condition of a captive. His army was defeated under the walls of that city which they had been on the point of entering as conquerors. Ten thousand, including many a gallant knight, lay dead on the field, and the misfortune was crowned by the capture of the king himself, who was taken prisoner in the battle, and carried to Madrid as a trophy of the conqueror. In Spain, Francis I. dragged out a wretched year in captivity. The emperor, elated by his good fortune, and desirous not only of humiliating his royal prisoner, but of depriving him of the power of injuring him in time to come, imposed very hard conditions of ransom. These the French king readily subscribed, and all the more so that he had not the slightest intention of fulfilling them. "In the treaty of peace, it is stipulated among other things," says Sleidan, "that the emperor and king shall endeavor to extirpate the enemies of the Christian religion, and the heresies of the sect of the Lutherans. In like manner, that peace being made betwixt them, they should settle the affairs of the public, and make war against the Turk and heretics excommunicated by the Church; for that it was above all things necessary, and that the Pope had often solicited and advised them to bestir themselves therein. That, therefore, in compliance with his desires, they resolved to entreat him that he would appoint a certain day when the ambassadors and deputies of all kings and princes might meet, in a convenient place, with full power and commission to treat of such measures as might seem proper for undertaking a war against the Turk, and also for rooting out heretics and the enemies of

the Church.”¹ Other articles were added of a very rigorous kind, such as that the French king should surrender Burgundy to the emperor, and renounce all pretensions to Italy, and deliver up his two eldest sons as hostages for the fulfillment of the stipulations. Having signed the treaty, early in January, 1526, Francis was set at liberty. Crossing the frontier near Irun, and touching French soil once more, he waved his cap in the air, and shouting aloud, “I am yet a king!” he put spurs to his Turkish horse, and galloped along the road to St. John de Luz, where his courtiers waited to welcome him.²

The hour was now come, so Charles V. thought, when he could deal his long-meditated blow against the Wittemberg heresy. Never since he ascended the throne had he been so much at liberty to pursue the policy to which his wishes prompted. The battle of Pavia had brought the war in Italy to a more prosperous issue than he had dared to hope. France was no longer a thorn in his side. Its monarch, formerly his rival, he had now converted into his ally, or rather, as Charles doubtless believed, into his lieutenant, bound to aid him in his enterprises, and specially in that one that lay nearer his heart than any other. Moreover, the emperor was on excellent terms with the King of England, and it was the interest of the English minister, Cardinal Wolsey, who cherished hopes of the tiara through the powerful influence of Charles, that that good understanding should continue. As regarded Pope Clement, the emperor was on the point of visiting Rome to receive the imperial crown from the Pontiff’s hands, and in addition, doubtless, the apostolic benediction on the enterprise which Charles had in view against an enemy that Clement abhorred more than he did the Turk.

This was a most favorable juncture for prosecuting the battle of the Papacy. The victory of Pavia had left Charles the most puissant monarch in Europe. On all sides was peace, and having vanquished so many foes, surely it would be no difficult matter to extinguish the monk, who had neither sword nor buckler to defend him. Accordingly, Charles now took the first step toward the execution of his design. Sitting down (May 24, 1525) in the stately Alcazar of Toledo,³ whose rocky foundations are washed by the Tagus, he

¹Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 102.

²Sleidan, bk. 6, pp. 102, 103. Robertson, bk. 4, pp. 149, 150.

³Sleidan, bk. 5, p. 96.

indited his summons to the princes and States of Germany to meet at Augsburg, and take measures “to defend the Christian religion, and the holy rites and customs received from their ancestors, and to prohibit all pernicious doctrines and innovations.” This edict the emperor supplemented by instructions from Seville, dated March 23, 1526, which, in effect, enjoined the princes to see to the execution of the Edict of Worms.⁴ Every hour the tempest that was gathering over Protestantism grew darker. [521]

If at no previous period had the emperor been stronger, or his sword so free to execute his purpose, at no time had Luther been so defenseless as now. His protector, the Elector Frederick, whose circumspection approached timidity, but whose purpose was ever resolute and steady, was now dead. The three princes who stood up in his room—the Elector John, Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, and Albert of Prussia—were new to the cause; they lacked the influence which Frederick possessed; they were discouraged, almost dismayed, by the thickening dangers—Germany divided, the Ratisbon League rampant, and the author of the Edict of Worms placed by the unlooked-for victory of Pavia at the head of Europe. The only man who did not tremble was Luther. Not that he did not see the formidable extent of the danger, but because he was able to realize a Defender whom others could not see. He knew that if the Gospel had been stripped of all earthly defense it was not because it was about to perish, but because a Divine hand was about to be stretched out in its behalf, so visibly as to give proof to the world that it had a Protector, though “unseen,” more powerful than all its enemies. While dreadful fulminations were coming from the other side of the Alps, and while angry and mortal menaces were being hourly uttered in Germany, what did Luther do? Run to his cell, and do penance in sackcloth and ashes to turn away the ire of emperor and Pontiff? No. Taking Catherine von Bors by the hand he led her to the altar, and made her his wife.⁵

Catherine von Bora was the daughter of one of the minor nobles of the Saxon Palatinate. Her father’s fortune was not equal to his rank, and this circumstance disabling him from giving Catherine a

⁴Ibid, bk. vi., p. 103.

⁵Sleidan, bk. 5, p. 97.

dowry, he placed her in the convent of Nimptsch, near Grimma, in Saxony. Along with the eight nuns who were the companions of her seclusion, she studied the Scriptures, and from them the sisters came to see that their vow was not binding. The Word of God had unbarred the door of their cell. The nine nuns, leaving the convent in a body, repaired to Wittemberg, and were there maintained by the bounty of the elector, administered through Luther. In process of time all the nuns found husbands, and Kate alone of the nine remained unmarried. The Reformer thus had opportunity of knowing her character and virtues, and appreciating the many accomplishments which were more rarely the ornament of the feminine intellect in those days than they are in ours. The marriage took place on the 11th of June. On the evening of that day, Luther, accompanied by the pastor Pomeranus, whom he had asked to bless the union, repaired to the house of the burgomaster, who had been constituted Kate's guardian, and there, in the presence of two witnesses-the great painter, Lucas Cranach, and Dr. John Apella - the marriage took place. On the 15th of June, Luther says, in a letter to Ruhel, "I have made the determination to retain nothing of my Papistical life, and thus I have entered the state of matrimony, at the urgent solicitation of my father."⁶ The special purport of the letter was to invite Ruhel to the marriage-feast, which was to be given on Tuesday, the 27th of June. The old couple from Mansfeld-John and Margaret Luther - were to be present. Ruhel was wealthy, and Luther, with characteristic frankness, tells him that any present he might choose to bring with him would be acceptable. Wenceslaus Link, of Nuremberg, whose nuptials Luther had blessed some time before, was also invited; but, being poor, it was stipulated that he should bring no present. Spalatin was to send some venison, and come himself. Amsdorf also was of the number of the guests. Philip Melancthon, the dearest friend of all, was absent. We can guess the reason. The bold step of Luther had staggered him. To marry while so many calamities impended! Philip went about some days with an anxious and clouded face, but when the clamor arose his brow cleared, his eye brightened, and he became the warmest defender of

⁶Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 5, pp. 15, 16.

the marriage of the Reformer, in which he was joined by not a few wise and moderate men in the Romish Church.⁷

The union was hardly effected when, as we have already hinted, a shout of indignation arose, as if Luther had done some impious and horrible thing. "It is incest!" exclaimed Henry VIII. of England. "From this marriage will spring Antichrist," said others, remembering with terror that some nameless astrologer of the Middle Ages had foretold that Antichrist would be the issue of a perjured nun and an apostate monk. "How many Antichrists," said Erasmus, with that covert but trenchant irony in which he was so great a master, "How many Antichrists must there be then in the world already!"⁸ [522] What was Luther's crime? He had obeyed an ordinance which God has instituted, and he had entered into a state which an apostle has pronounced "honorable in all." But he did not heed the noise. It was his way of saying to Rome, "This is the obedience I give to your ordinances, and this is the awe in which I stand of your threatenings." The rebuke thus tacitly given sank deep. It was another inexpiable offense, added to many former ones, for which, as Rome fondly believed, the hour of recompense was now drawing nigh. Even some of the disciples of the Reformation were scandalised at Luther's marrying an ex-nun, so slow are men to cast off the trammels of ages.

With Catherine Bora there entered a new light into the dwelling of Luther. To sweetness and modesty, she added a more than ordinary share of good sense. A genuine disciple of the Gospel, she became the faithful companion and help-meet of the Reformer in all the labours and trials of his subsequent life. From the inner circle of that serenity and peace which her presence diffused around him, he looked forth upon a raging world which was continually seeking to destroy him, and which marvelled that the Reformer did not sink, not seeing the Hand that turned aside the blows which were being ceaselessly aimed at him.

⁷The portraits of Kate, from originals by Lucas Cranach, represent her with a round full face, a straight pointed nose, and large eyes. Romanist writers have been more complimentary to her, as regards beauty, than Protestants, who generally speak of her as plain.

⁸Melch. Adam., Vit. Luth., p. 131. Seckendorf, 2, 5, p. 18.

Chapter 10: Diet at Spires, 1526, and League Against the Emperor

A Storm-Rolls away from Wittemberg-Clement Hopes to Restore
the Mediaeval Papal Glories-Forms a League against the
Emperor- Changes of the Wind-Charles turns to Wittemberg-Diet at
Spires- Spirit of the Lutheran Princes-Duke John-Landgrave
Philip-“The Word of the Lord endureth for ever”-Protestant
Sermons-City Churches Deserted-The Diet takes the Road to
Wittemberg-The Free Towns-The Reforms Demanded-Popish Party
Discouraged-The Emperor’s Letter from Seville-Consternation

Picture: The Reformed Princes on their Way to the Diet at Spires

The storm had been coming onward for some time. The emperor and the Pope, at the head of the confederate kings and subservient princes of the Empire, were advancing against the Reformation, to strike once and for all. Events fell out in the Divine appointment that seemed to pave the way of the assailing host, and make their victory sure. Frederick, who till now had stood between Luther and the mailed hand of Charles, was at that moment borne to the tomb. It seemed as if the crusades of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were about to be repeated, and that the Protestantism of the sixteenth century was to be extinguished in a tempest of horrors, similar to that which had swept away the Albigensian confessors. However, despite the terrible portents now visible in every quarter of the sky, the confidence of Luther that all would yet go well was not to be disappointed. Just as the tempest seemed about to burst over Wittemberg, to the amazement of all men, it rolled away, and discharged itself with terrific violence on Rome. Let us see how this came about.

Of the potentates with whom Charles had contracted alliance, or with whom he was on terms of friendship, the one he could most thoroughly depend on, one would have thought, was the Pope. In the affair the emperor had now in hand, the interest and policy of

Charles and of Clement were undoubtedly identical. On what could the Pope rely for deliverance from that host of heretics that Germany was sending forth, but on the sword of Charles V.? Yet at this moment the Pope suddenly turned against the emperor, and, as if smitten with infatuation, wrecked the expedition that Charles meditated for the triumph of Rome and the humiliation of Wittemberg just as the emperor was on the point of beginning it. This was passing strange. What motive led the Pope to adopt a policy so suicidal? That which misled Clement was his dream of restoring the lost glories of the Popedom, and making it what it had been under Gregory VII. We have already pointed out the change effected in the European system by the wars of the fifteenth century, and how much that change contributed to pave the way for the advent of Protestantism. The Papacy was lowered and monarchy was lifted up; but the Popes long cherished the hope that the change was only temporary, that Christendom would return to its former state—the true one they deemed it—and that all the crowns of Europe would be once more under the tiara. Therefore, though Clement was pleased to see the advancement of Charles V. so far as it enabled him to serve the Roman See, he had no wish to see him at the summit. The Pope was especially jealous of the Spanish power in Italy. Charles already possessed Naples; the victory of Pavia had given him a firm footing in Lombardy. Thus, both in the north and in the south of the Italian peninsula, the Spanish power hemmed in the Pontiff. Clement aspired to erect Italy into an independent kingdom, and from Rome, its old capital, govern it as its temporal monarch, while he swayed his scepter over all Christendom as its spiritual chief. The hour was favorable, he thought, for the realization of this fine project. There was a party of literary men in Florence and Rome who were full of the idea of restoring Italy to her old place among the kingdoms. This idea was the result of the literary and artistic progress of the Italians during the half-century which had just elapsed;¹ and the result enables us to compare the relative forces of the Renaissance and the Reformation. The first engendered in the bosoms of the Italians a burning detestation of the yoke of their foreign masters,

¹Ranke, bk. 1, chap. 3, p. 77; Lond., 1847.

but left them entirely without power to free themselves. The last brought both the love of liberty and the power of achieving it.

Knowing this feeling on the part of his countrymen, Pope Clement, thinking the hour was come for restoring to the Papacy its mediaeval glories, opened negotiations with Louisa of Savoy, who administered the government of France during the captivity of her son, and afterwards with Francis I. himself when he had recovered his liberty. He corresponded with the King of England, who favored the project; with Venice, with Milan, with the Republic of Florence. And all these parties, moved by fear of the overgrown power of the emperor, were willing to enter into a league with the Pope against Charles V. This, known as the "Holy League," was subscribed at Cognac, and the King of England was put at the head of it.² Thus suddenly did the change come. Blind to everything beyond his immediate object-to the risks of war, to the power of his opponent, and to the diversion he was creating in favor of Wittemberg-the Pope, without loss of time, sent his army into the Duchy of Milan, to begin operations against the Spaniards.³

While hostilities are pending in the north of Italy, let us turn our eyes to Germany. The Diet, which, as we have already said, had been summoned by Charles to meet at Augsburg, was at this moment assembled at Spires It had met at Augsburg, agreeably to the imperial command, in November, 1525, but it was so thinly attended that it adjourned to midsummer next year, to be held at Spires, where we now find it. It had been convoked in order to lay the train for the execution of the Edict of Worms, and the suppression of Protestantism. But between the issuing of the summons and meeting of the assembly the politics of Europe had entirely changed. When the emperor's edict passed out of the gates of the Alcazar of Toledo the wind was setting full toward the Vatican, the Pope was the emperor's staunchest ally, and was preparing to place the imperial

²Bullar, Mag. [Romans 10, 55](#); Luxem., 1741. The bull of Clement styles the league "Confideratio atque Sanctissimum Foedus," and names "Our dear son in Christ, Henry, King of England and Lord of Ireland, Defender of the Faith, protector and conservator of it."

³Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 105-where the reader will find a summary of the conditions of the league between the Pope and his confederates. Ranke, bk. 1, chap. 3, pp. 77, 78. D'Aubigne, vol. 4, p. 10.

crown on his head; but since then the wind had suddenly veered round toward the opposite quarter, and Charles must turn with it—he must play off Luther against Clement. This complete reversal of the political situation was as yet unknown in Germany, or but vaguely surmised.

The Diet assembled at Spires on the 25th of June, 1526, and all the electoral princes were present, except the Prince of Brandenburg. ⁴ The Reformed princes were in strong muster, and in high spirits. The fulminations from Spain had not terrified them. Their courage might be read in the gallantry of their bearing as they rode along to Spires, at the head of their armed retainers, with the five significant letters blazoned on their banners, and shown also on their escutcheons hung out on the front of their hotels, and even embroidered on the liveries of their servants, V. D.

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M. I. AE., that is, *Verbum Domini manet in AEternum* ("The word of the Lord endureth for ever"). ⁵

Theirs was not the crestfallen air of men who were going to show cause why they dared be Lutherans when it was the will of the emperor that they should be Romanists. Charles had thundered against them in his ban; they had given their reply in the motto which they had written upon their standards, "The Word of God." Under this sign would they conquer. Their great opponent was advancing against them at the head of kingdoms and armies; but the princes lifted their eyes to the motto on their ensigns, and took courage: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." ⁶

Whoever in the sixteenth century would assert rank and challenge influence, must display a corresponding magnificence. John, Duke of Saxony, entered Spires with a retinue of 700 horsemen. The

⁴Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 105.

⁵"The command of God endures through Eternity, *Verbum Dei Manet In AEternum*," was the Epigraph and Life-motto which John the Steadfast had adopted for himself; V. D. M. I. AE., these initials he had engraved on all the furnitures of his existence, on his standards, pictures, plate, on the very sleeves of his lackeys, and I can perceive, on his own deep heart first of all. V.D.M. I.E.: -or might it not be read withal, as Philip of Hessen sometimes said (Philip, still a young fellow, capable of sport in his magnanimous scorn), "Verbum Diaboli Manet in Episcopis, The Devil's Word sticks fast in the Bishops"?" (Carlyle, *Frederick the Great*, bk. 3, chap. 5.)

⁶Psalm 20:7.

splendor of his style of living far exceeded that of the other electors, ecclesiastical and lay, and gained for him the place of first prince of the Empire. The next after Duke John to figure at the Diet was Philip, Landgrave of Hesse. His wealth did not enable him to maintain so numerous a retinue as Duke John, but his gallant bearing, ready address, and skill in theological discussion gave him a grand position. Bishops he did not fear to encounter in debate. His arsenal was the Bible, and so adroit was he in the use of his weapons, that his antagonist, whether priest or layman, was sure to come off only second best. Both Duke John and Landgrave Philip understood the crisis that had arrived, and resolved that nothing should be wanting on their part to ward off the dangers that from so many quarters, and in a combination so formidable, threatened at this hour the Protestant cause.

Their first demand on arriving at Spire was for a church in which the Gospel might be preached. The Bishop of Spire stood aghast at the request. Did the princes know what they asked? Was not Lutheranism under the ban of the Empire? Had not the Diet been assembled to suppress it, and uphold the old religion? If then he should open a Lutheran conventicle in the city, and set up a Lutheran pulpit in the midst of the Diet, what would be thought of his conduct at Rome? No! while the Church's oil was upon him he would listen to no such proposal. Well, replied the princes in effect, if a church cannot be had, the Gospel will lose none of its power by being preached outside cathedral. The elector and landgrave, who had brought their chaplains with them, opened their hotels for worship.⁷ On one Sunday, it is said, as many as 8,000 assembled to the Protestant sermon. While the saloons of the princes were thronged, the city churches were deserted. If we except Ferdinand and the Catholic princes, who thought it incumbent upon them to countenance the old worship, scarce in nave or aisle was there worshipper to be seen. The priests were left alone at the foot of the altars. The tracts of Luther, freely distributed in Spire, helped too to make the popular tide set yet more strongly in the Reformed direction; and the public feeling, so unequivocally declared, reacted on the Diet.

⁷Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 9.

The Reformed princes and their friends were never seen at mass; and on the Church's fast-days, as on other days, meat appeared at their tables. Perhaps they were a little too ostentatious in letting it be known that they gave no obedience to the ordinance of "Forbidden meats." It was not necessary on "magro" day, as the Italians call it, to carry smoking joints to Lutheran tables in full sight of Romanist assemblies engaged in their devotions, in order to show their Protestantism.⁸ They took other and more commendable methods to distinguish between themselves and the adherents of the old creed. They strictly charged their attendants to an orderly and obliging behavior; they commanded them to eschew taverns and gaming-tables, and generally to keep aloof from the roustering and disorderly company which the Diets of the Empire commonly drew into the cities where they were held.⁹ Their preachers proclaimed the doctrines, and their followers exhibited the fruits of Lutheranism. Thus all undesignedly a powerful Protestant propaganda was established in Spires. The leaven was spreading in the population.

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Meanwhile the Diet was proceeding with its business. Ferdinand of Austria it was suspected had very precise instructions from his brother, the emperor, touching the measures he wished the Diet to adopt. But Ferdinand, before delivering them, waited to see how the Diet would incline. If it should hold the straight road, so unmistakably traced out; in the Edict of Worms, he would be spared the necessity of delivering the harsh message with which he had been charged; but if the Diet should stray in the direction of Wittemberg, then he would make known the emperor's commands.

The Diet had not gone far till it was evident that it had left the road in which Ferdinand and the emperor desired that it should walk. Not only did it not execute the Edict of Worms-declaring this to be impossible, and that if the emperor were on the spot he too would be of this mind-but it threw on Charles the blame of the civil strife which had lately raged in Germany, by so despotically forbidding in the Decree of Burgos the assembling of the Diet at Spires, as agreed on at Nuremberg, and so leaving the wounds of Germany to fester, till they issued in "seditions and a bloody civil war." It demanded,

⁸Cochlaeus complains of this as a tempting of the faithful by the savor of wines and meats (p. 138).

⁹Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 9.

moreover, the speedy convocation of a general or national council to redress the public grievances. In these demands we trace the rising influence of the free towns in the Diet. The lay element was asserting itself, and challenging the sole right of the priests to settle ecclesiastical affairs. The Popish members, perceiving how the tide was setting, became discouraged. ¹⁰

Nor was this all. A paper was given in (August 4th) to the princes by the representatives of several of the cities of Germany, proposing other changes in opposition to the known will and policy of the emperor. In this paper the cities complained that poor men were saddled with Mendicant friars, who “wheedled them, and ate the bread out of their mouths; nor was that all—many times they hooked in inheritances and most ample legacies.” The cities demanded that a stop should be put to the multiplication of these fraternities; that when any of the friars died their places should not be filled by new members; that those among them who were willing to embrace another calling should have a small annual pension allowed them; and that the rest of their revenues should be brought into the public treasury. It was not reasonable, they further maintained, that the clergy should be exempt from all public burdens. That privilege had been granted them of old by the bounty of kings; but then they were “few in number” and “low in fortune;” now they were both numerous and rich. The exemption was the more invidious that the clergy shared equally with others in the advantages for which money and taxes were levied. They complained, moreover, of the great number of holidays. The severe penalties which forbade useful labor on these days did not shut out temptations to vice and crime, and these periods of compulsory idleness were as unfavorable to the practice of virtue as to the habit of industry. They prayed, moreover, that the law touching forbidden meats should be abolished, and that all men should be left at liberty on the head of ceremonies till such time as a General Council should assemble, and that meanwhile no obstruction should be offered to the preaching of the Gospel. ¹¹

It was now that the storm really burst. Seeing the Diet treading the road that led to Wittemberg, and fearing that, should he longer

¹⁰Sleidan, bk. 6, pp. 103, 104.

¹¹Sleidan, bk. 6, pp. 103, 104.

delay, it would arrive there, Ferdinand drew forth from its repose in the recesses of his cabinet the emperor's letter, and read it to the deputies. The letter was dated Seville, March 26, 1526.¹² Charles had snatched a moment's leisure in the midst of his marriage festivities to make known his will on the religious question, in prospect of the meeting of the Diet. The emperor informed the princes that he was about to proceed to Rome to be crowned; that he would consult with the Pope touching the calling of a General Council; that meanwhile he "willed and commanded that they should decree nothing contrary to the ancient customs, canons, and ceremonies of the Church, and that all things should be ordered within his dominions according to the form and tenor of the Edict of Worms."¹³ This was the Edict of Worms over again. It meted out to the disciples of Protestantism chains, prisons, and stakes.

The first moments were those of consternation. The check was the more severe that it came at a time when the hopes of the Protestants were high. Landgrave Philip was triumphing in the debate; the free towns were raising their voices; the Popish section of the Diet was maintaining a languid fight; all Germany seemed on the point of being carried over to the Lutheran side; when, all at once, the Protestants were brought up before the powerful man who, as the conqueror of Pavia, had humbled the King of France, and placed himself at the summit of Europe. In his letter they heard the first tramp of his legions advancing to overwhelm them. Verily they had need to lift their eyes again to their motto, and draw fresh courage from it—"The Word of the Lord endureth for ever."

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¹²At that time the Pope had not concluded his alliance with France.

¹³Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 103. Fra-Paolo Sarpi, livr. 1, p. 71.

Chapter 11: The Sack of Rome

A Great Crisis-Deliverance Dawns-Tidings of Feud between the Pope and Emperor-Political Situation Reversed-Edict of Worms Suspended-Legal Settlement of Toleration in Germany-The Tempest takes the Direction of Rome- Charles's Letter to Clement VII.-An Army Raised in Germany for the Emperor's Assistance—Freundsberg-The German Troops Cross the Alps-Junction with the Spanish General-United Host March on Rome-The City Taken-Sack of Rome-Pillage and Slaughter-Rome never Retrieves the Blow

Picture: The Cathedral of Spire

Picture: The Castle of St. Angelo Rome

What were the Protestant princes to do? On every hand terrible dangers threatened their cause. The victory of Pavia, as we have already said, had placed Charles at the head of Christendom: what now should prevent his giving effect to the Edict of Worms? It had hung, like a naked sword, above Protestantism these five years, threatening every moment to descend and crush it. Its author was now all-powerful: what should hinder his snapping the thread that held it from falling? He was on his way to concert measures to that effect with the Pope. In Germany, the Ratisbon League was busy extirpating Lutheranism within its territories. Frederick was in his grave. From the Kings of England and France no aid was to be expected. The Protestants were hemmed in on every hand.

It was at that hour that a strange rumor reached their ears. The emperor and the Pope were, it was whispered, at strife! The news was hardly credible. At length came detailed accounts of the league that Clement VII. had formed against the emperor, with the King of England at its head. The Protestants, when these tidings reached them, thought they saw a pathway beginning to open through the midst of tremendous dangers. But a little before, they had felt as the Israelites did on the shore of the Red Sea, with the precipitous

cliffs of Aba Deraj on their right, the advancing war-chariots and horsemen of Pharaoh on their left, while behind them rose the peaks of Atakah, and in front rolled the waters of the broad, deep, and impassable gulf. No escape was left the terror-stricken Israelites, save through the plain of Badiya, which opened in their rear, and led back into the former house of their bondage. So of the men who were now essaying to flee from a gloomier prison, and a more debasing as well as more lengthened bondage than that of the Israelites in Egypt, "they" were "entangled in the land, the wilderness" had "shut them in." Behind them was the Ratisbon League; in front were the emperor and Pope, one in interest and policy, as the Protestant princes believed. They had just had read to them the stern command of Charles to abolish no law, change no doctrine, and omit no rite of the Roman Church, and to proceed in accordance with the Edict of Worms; which was as much as to say, Unsheatheages had laid their gifts. Its beauty was perfect your swords, and set about the instant and complete purgation of Germany from Luther and Lutheranism, under penalty of being yourselves visited with a like infliction by the arms of the Empire. How they were to escape from this dilemma, save by a return to the obedience of the Pope, they could not at that moment see. As they turned first to one hand, then to another, they could descry nothing but unscaleable cliffs, and fathomless abysses. At length deliverance appeared to dawn in the most unexpected quarter of all. They had never looked to Rome or to Spain, yet there it was that they began to see escape opening to them. The emperor and the Pope, they were told, were at variance: so then they were to march through the sundered camp of their enemies. With feelings of wonder and awe, not less lively than those of the Hebrew host when they saw the waves beginning to divide, and a pathway to open from shore to shore, did the Lutheran chiefs and their followers see the host of their foes, gathered in one mighty confederacy to overwhelm them, begin to draw apart, and ultimately form themselves into two opposing camps, leaving a pathway between, by which the little Protestant army, under their banner with its sacred emblazonry—"The Word of the Lord endureth for ever" - might march onwards to a place of safety. The influence that parted the hearts and councils of their enemies, and turned their arms against each other, they no more could see than the Israelites could see the Power that divided the

waters and made them stand upright, but that the same Power was at work in the latter as in the former case they could not doubt. The Divine Hand has never been wanting to the Gospel and its friends, but seldom has its interposition been more manifest than at this crisis.

[529] The emperor's ukase from Seville, breathing death to Lutheranism, was nearly as much out of date and almost as little to be regarded as if it had been fulminated a century before. A single glance revealed to the Lutheran princes the mighty change which had taken place in affairs. Christendom was now in arms against the man who but a few months ago had stood at its summit; and, instead of girding himself to fight against Lutheranism for the Pope, Charles must now ask the aid of Lutheranism in the battle that he was girding himself to fight against the Pope and his confederate kings. It was even whispered in the Diet that conciliatory instructions of later date had arrived from the emperor. ¹ Ferdinand, it was said, was bidden in these later letters to draw toward Duke John and the other Lutheran princes, to cancel the penal clauses in the Edict of Worms, and to propose that the whole religious controversy should be referred to a General Council; but he feared, it was said, to make these instructions known, lest he should alienate the Popish members of the Diet.

[530] Nor was it necessary he should divulge the new orders. The astounding news of the "League of Cognac," that "most holy confederation" of which Clement VII. was the patron and promoter, had alone sufficed to sow distrust and dismay among the Popish members of the Diet. They knew that this strange league had "broken the bow" of the emperor, had weakened the hands of his friends in the Council; and that to press for the execution of the Edict of Worms would result only in damage to the man and the party in whose interests it had been framed.

In the altered relations of the emperor to the Papacy, the Popish section of the Diet-among the more prominent of whom were the Dukes of Brunswick and Pomerania, Prince George of Saxony, and the Dukes of Bavaria- dared not come to an open rupture with the Reformers. The peasant-war had just swept over Germany, leaving

¹Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 103.

many parts of the Fatherland covered with ruins and corpses, and to begin a new conflict with the Lutheran princes, and the free and powerful cities which had espoused the cause of the Reformation, would be madness. Thus the storm passed away. Nay, the crisis resulted in great good to the Reformation. "A decree was made at length to this purpose," says Sleidan, "that for establishing religion, and maintaining peace and quietness, it was necessary there should be a lawful General or Provincial Council of Germany held within a year; and, that no delay or impediment might intervene, that ambassadors should be sent to the emperor, to pray him that he would look upon the miserable and tumultuous state of the Empire, and come into Germany as soon as he could, and procure a Council. As to religion and the Edict of Worms," continued the Diet-conferring by a simple expedient one of the greatest of blessings-" As to religion and the Edict of Worms, in the meanwhile till a General or National Council can be had, all shall so behave themselves in their several provinces as that they may be able to render an account of their doings both to God and the emperor"² - that is, every State was to be free to act in religion upon its own judgment.

Most historians have spoken of this as a great epoch. "The legal existence of the Protestant party in the Empire," says Ranke, "is based on the Decree of Spires of 1526."³ "The Diet of 1526," says D'Aubigne, "forms an important epoch in history: an ancient power, that of the Middle Ages, is shaken; a new power, that of modern times, is advancing; religious liberty boldly takes its stand in front of Romish despotism; a lay spirit prevails over the sacerdotal spirit."⁴ This edict was the first legal blow dealt at the supremacy and infallibility of Rome. It was the dawn of toleration in matters of conscience to nations: the same right had still to be extended to individuals. A mighty boon had been won. Campaigns have been fought for less blessings: the Reformers had obtained this without unsheathing a single sword.

But the storm did not disperse without first bursting. As the skies of Germany became clear those of Rome became overcast. The winter passed away in some trifling affairs between the Papal

²Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 104.

³Ranke, bk. 1, chap. 3, p. 80.

⁴D'Aubigne, vol. 4, p. 12.

and the Spanish troops in Lombardy; but when the spring of 1527 opened, a war-cloud began to gather, and in due time it rolled down from the Alps, and passing on to the south, it discharged itself in terrible violence upon the city and chair of the Pontiff.

Before having recourse to arms against the “Holy Father,” who, contrary to all the probabilities of the case, and contrary also to his own interest, had conspired against his most devoted as well as most powerful son, the emperor made trial of his pen. In a letter of the 18th September, written in the gorgeous halls of the Alhambra, Charles reminded Clement VII. of the many services he had rendered him, for which, it appeared, he must now accept as payment the league formed against him at his instigation “Seeing,” said the emperor to the Pope, “God hath set us up as two great luminaries, let us endeavor that the world may be enlightened by us, and that no eclipse may happen by our dissensions. But,” continued the emperor, having recourse to what has always been the terror of Popes, “if you will needs go on like a warrior, I protest and appeal to a Council.”⁵ This letter was without effect in the Vatican, and these “two luminaries,” to use the emperor’s metaphor, instead of shedding light on the world began to scorch it with fire. The war was pushed forward.

[531] The emperor had requested his brother Ferdinand to take command of the army destined to act against the Pope. Ferdinand, however, could not, at this crisis, be absent from Germany without great inconvenience, and accordingly he commissioned Friendsberg, the same valorous knight who, as we have related, addressed the words of encouragement to Luther when he entered the imperial hall at Worms, to raise troops for the emperor’s assistance, and lead them across the Alps. Friendsberg was a genuine lover of the Gospel, but the work he had now in hand was no evangelical service, and he set about it with the coolness, the business air, and the resolution of the old soldier. It was November (1526); the snows had already fallen on the Alps, making it doubly hazardous to climb their precipices and pass their summits. But such was the ardour of both general and army, that this host of 15,000 men in three days had crossed the mountains and joined the Constable of Bourbon, the emperor’s gen-

⁵Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 107; see the correspondence between the emperor, the Pope, and the cardinals in his pages.

eral, on the other side of them. On effecting a junction, the combined German and Spanish army, which now amounted to 20,000, set out on their march on Rome. The German general carried with him a great iron chain, wherewith, as he told his soldiers, he intended to hang the Pope. Rome, however, he was never to see, a circumstance more to be regretted by the Romans than by the Germans; for the kindly though rough soldier would, had he lived, have restrained the wild licence of his army, which wrought such woes to all in the fated city. Friendsberg fell sick and died by the way, but his soldiers pressed forward. On the evening of the 5th of May, the invaders first sighted, through a thin haze, those venerable walls, over which many a storm had lowered, but few more terrible than that now gathering around them. What a surprise to a city which, full of banquetings and songs and all manner of delights, lived carelessly, and never dreamt that war would approach it! Yet here were the spoilers at her gates. Next morning, under cover of a dense fog, the soldiers approached the walls, the scaling-ladders were fixed, and in a few hours the troops were masters of Rome. The Pope and the cardinals fled to the Castle of St. Angelo. A little while did the soldiers rest on their arms, till the Pope should come to terms. Clement, however, scouted the idea of surrender. He expected deliverance every moment from the arms of the Holy League. The patience of the troops was soon exhausted, and the sack began.

We cannot, even at this distance of time, relate the awful tragedy without a shudder. The Constable Bourbon had perished in the first assault, and the army was left without any leader powerful enough to restrain the indulgence of its passions and appetites. What a city to spoil! There was not at that era another such on earth. At its feet the ages had laid their gifts. Its beauty was perfect! Whatever was rare, curious, or precious in the world was gathered into it. It was ennobled by the priceless monuments of antiquity; it was enriched with the triumphs of recent genius and art; the glory lent it by the chisel of Michael Angelo, the pencil of Rafael, and the tastes and munificence of Leo X. was yet fresh upon it. It was full to overflowing with the riches of all Christendom, which for centuries had been flowing into it through a hundred avenues—dispensations, pardons, jubilees, pilgrimages, annats, palls, and contrivances innumerable. But the hour had now come to her “that spoiled and was not spoiled.”

The hungry soldiers flung themselves upon the prey. In a twinkling there burst over the sacerdotal city a mingled tempest of greed and rage, of lust and bloodthirsty vengeance.

The pillage was unsparing as pitiless. The most secret places were broken open and ransacked. Even the torture was employed, in some cases upon prelates and princes of the Church, to make them disgorge their wealth. Not only were the stores of the merchant, the bullion of the banker, and the hoards of the usurer plundered, the altars were robbed of their vessels, and the churches of their tapestry and votive offerings. The tombs were rifled, the relics of the canonized were spoiled, and the very corpses of the Popes were stripped of their rings and ornaments. The plunder was piled up in heaps in the market-places-gold and silver cups, jewels, sacks of coin, pyxes, rich vestments-and the articles were gambled for by the soldiers, who, with abundance of wine and meat at their command, made wassail in the midst of the stricken and bleeding city.

Blood, pillage, and grim pleasantries were strangely and hideously mixed. Things and persons which the Romans accounted "holy," the soldiery took delight in exposing to ridicule, mockery, and outrage. The Pontifical ceremonial was exhibited in mimic pomp. Camp-boys were arrayed in cope and stole and chasuble, as if they were going to consecrate. Bishops and cardinals -in some cases stripped nude, in others attired in fantastic dress-were mounted on asses and lean mules, their faces turned to the animal's croupe, and led through the streets, while ironical cheers greeted the unwelcome dignity to which they had been promoted. The Pope's robes and tiara were brought forth, and put upon a lansquenet, while others of the soldiers, donning the red hats and purple gowns of the cardinals, went through the form of a Pontifical election. The mock-conclave, having traversed the city in the train of the pseudo-Pope, halted before the Castle of St. Angelo, and there they deposed Clement VII., and elected "Martin Luther" in his room. "Never," says D'Aubigme, "had Pontiff been proclaimed with such perfect unanimity."

[532] The Spanish soldiers were more embittered against the ecclesiastics than the Germans were, and their animosity, instead of evaporating in grim humor and drollery, like that of their Tramontane comrades, took a practical and deadly turn. Not content with rifling their victims of their wealth, they made them in many cases pay

the forfeit of their lives. Some Church dignitaries expired in their hands in the midst of cruel tortures. They spared no age, no rank, no sex. "Most piteous," says Guiciardini, "were the shrieks and lamentations of the women of Rome, and no less worthy of compassion the deplorable condition of nuns and novices, whom the soldiers drove along by troops out of their convents, that they might satiate their brutal lust.... Amid this female wail, were mingled the hoarser clamors and groans of unhappy men, whom the soldiers subjected to torture, partly to wrest from them unreasonable ransom, and partly to compel the disclosure of the goods which they had concealed."⁶

The sack of Rome lasted ten days. "It was reported," says Guiciardini, "that the booty taken might be estimated at a million of ducats; but the ransoms of the prisoners amounted to a far larger sum." The number of victims is estimated at from 5,000 to 10,000. The population on whom this terrible calamity fell were, upon the testimony of their own historians, beyond measure emasculated by effeminacy and vice. Vettori describes them as "proud, avaricious, murderous, envious, luxurious, and hypocritical."⁷ There were then in Rome, says Ranke, "30,000 inhabitants capable of bearing arms. Many of these men had seen service." But, though they wore arms by their side, there was neither bravery nor manhood in their breasts. Had they possessed a spark of courage, they might have stopped the enemy in his advance to their city, or chased him from their walls after he appeared.

This stroke fell on Rome in the very prime of her mediaeval glory. The magnificence then so suddenly and terribly smitten has never revived. A few days sufficed to wellnigh annihilate a splendor which centuries were needed to bring to perfection, and which the centuries that have since elapsed have not been able to restore.

⁶The authorities consulted for this account of the sack of Rome are Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 111; Guiciardini, *Wars of Italy*, 2, 723; Ranke, vol. 1, pp. 80-83; D'Aubigne, vol. 4, pp. 14-20.

⁷Quoted by Ranke, vol. 1, p. 82 (foot-note). For a picture of the Rome of the early part of the sixteenth century, see the *Memoirs of a Roman of that age*-Benvenuto Cellini.

Chapter 12: Organization of the Lutheran Church

A Calm of Three Years-Luther Begins to Build-Christians, but no
Christian Society-Old Foundations-Gospel Creates
Christians- Christ their Center-Truth their Bond-Unity-Luther's
Theory of Priesthood-All True Christians Priests-Some Elected to
Discharge its Functions-Difference between Romish Priesthood and
Protestant Priesthood-Commission of Visitation-Its Work-Church
Constitution of Saxony

Picture: John Frederick, Elector of Saxony, surnamed "The Steadfast"

Picture: Francis Lambert Preaching

After the storm there came a three years' calm: not indeed to that world over which the Pope and the emperor presided. The Christendom that owned the sway of these two potentates continued still to be torn by intrigues and shaken by battles. It was a sea on which the stormy winds of ambition and war strove together. But the troubles of the political world brought peace to the Church. The Gospel had rest only so long as the arms of its enemies were turned against each other. The calm of three years from 1526 to 1529 -now vouchsafed to that new world which was rising in the midst of the old, was diligently occupied in the important work of organising and upbuilding. From Wittemberg, the center of this new world, there proceeded a mighty plastic influence, which was daily enlarging its limits and multiplying its citizens. To that we must now turn.

The way was prepared for the erection of the new edifice by the demolition of the old. How this came about we have said in the preceding chapter. The emperor had convoked the Diet at Spire expressly and avowedly to construct a defense around the old and now tottering edifice of Rome, and to raze to its foundations the new building of Wittemberg by the execution of the Edict of Worms of 1521: but the bolt forged to crush Wittemberg fell on Rome. Before the Diet had well begun their deliberations, the political situation

around the emperor had entirely changed. Western Europe, alarmed at the vast ambition of Charles, was confederate against him. He could not now execute the Edict of Worms, for fear of offending the Lutheran princes, on whom the League of Cognac compelled him to cast himself; and he could not repeal it, for fear of alienating from him the Popish princes. A middle path was devised, which tided over the emperor's difficulty, and gave a three years' liberty to the Church. The Diet decreed that, till a General Council should assemble, the question of religion should be an open one, and every State should be at liberty to act in it as it judged right. Thus the Diet, the assembling of which the friends of the Reformation had seen with alarm, and its enemies with triumph, seeing it was to ring the death-knell of Protestantism, achieved just the opposite result. It inflicted a blow which broke in pieces the theocratic sovereignty of Rome in the German States of the Empire, and cleared the ground for the building of a new spiritual temple.

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Luther was quick to perceive the opportunity that had at length arrived. The edict of 1526 sounded to him as a call to arise and build. When the Reformer came down from the Wartburg, where doubtless he had often meditated on these things, there was a Reformation, but no Reformed Church; there were Christians, but no visible Christian society. His next work must be to restore such. The fair fabric which apostolic hands had reared, and which primitive times had witnessed, had been cast down long since, and for ages had lain in ruins: it must be built up from its old foundations. The walls had fallen, but the foundations, he knew, were eternal, like those of the earth. On these old foundations, as still remaining in the Scriptures, Luther now began to build.

Hitherto the Reformer's work had been to preach the Gospel. By the preaching of the Gospel, he had called into existence a number of believing men, scattered throughout the provinces and cities of Germany, who were already actually, though not as yet visibly, distinct from the world, and to whom there belonged a real, though not as yet an outward, unity. They were gathered by their faith round one living center, even Christ; and they were knit by a great spiritual bond, namely, the truth, to one another. But the principle of union in the heart of each of these believing men must work itself into an outward unity—a unity visible to the world. Unless it does so, the

inward principle will languish and die-not, indeed, in those hearts in which it already exists, but in the world: it will fail to propagate itself. These Christians must be gathered into a family, and built up into a kingdom -a holy and spiritual kingdom.

The first necessity in the organization of the Church-the work to which Luther now put his hand-was an order of men, by whatever names called-priests, presbyters, or bishops-to preach and to dispense the Sacraments. Cut off from Rome-the sole fountain, as she held herself to be, of sacred offices and graces-how did the Reformer proceed in the re-constitution of the ministry? He assumed that functions are lodged inalienably in the Church, or company of believing men, or brotherhood of priests; for he steadfastly held to the priesthood of all believers. The express object for which the Church existed, he reasoned, was to spread salvation over the earth. How does she do this? She does it by the preaching of the Gospel and the dispensation of Sacraments. It is therefore the Church's duty to preach and to dispense the Sacraments. But duty, Luther reasoned, implies right and function. That function is the common possession of the Church-of all believers. But it is not to be exercised, in point of fact, by all the Church's members; it is to be exercised by some only. How are these some, then, to be chosen? Are they to enter upon the exercise of this function at their own pleasure-simply self-appointed? No; for what is the function of all cannot be specially exercised by any, save with the consent and election of the rest. The call or invitation of these others-the congregation, that is-constituted the right of the individual to discharge the office of "minister of the Word;" for so did the Reformer prefer to style those who were set apart in the Church to preach the Gospel and dispense the Sacraments. "In cases of necessity," says he, "all Christians may exercise all the functions of the clergy, but order requires the devolving of the office upon particular persons."¹ An immediate Divine call was not required to give one a right to exercise office in the Church: the call of God came through the instrumentality of man. Thus did Luther constitute the ministry. Till this had been done, the ministry could

¹Luther, *Theologie*, 2, 126-135. Dorner, *Hist. Protest. Theol.*, vol. 1, p. 174; Clerk, *Edin.*, 1871.

not have that legitimate part which belongs to it in the appointing of those who are to bear office in the Church. ²

The clergy of the Lutheran Church stood at the opposite pole from the clergy of the Roman Church. The former were democratic in their origin; the latter were monarchical. The former sprang from the people, by whom they were chosen, although that choice was viewed as being indirectly the call of God, who would accompany it with the gifts and graces necessary for the office; the latter were appointed by a sacerdotal monarch, and replenished for their functions by Sacramental ordination. The former differed in no essential point from the other members of the Church; the latter were a hierarchy, they formed a distinct order, inasmuch as they were possessed of exclusive qualities and powers. The ministrations of the former were effectual solely by faith in those who received them, and the working of the Spirit which accompanied them. Very different was it in the case of the Roman clergy; their ministrations, mainly sacrificial, were effectual by reason of the inherent efficacy of the act, and the official virtue of the man who performed it. Wherever there is a line of sacramentally ordained men, there and there only is the Church, said Rome. Wherever the Word is faithfully preached, and the Sacraments purely administered, there is the Church, said the Reformation. [534]

In providing for her order, the Church did not surrender her freedom. The power with which she clothed those whom she elected to office was not autocratic, but ministerial: those who held that power were the Church's servants, not her lords. Nor did the Church corporate put that power beyond her own reach: she had not parted with it once for all so that she should be required to yield a passive or helpless submission to her own ministers. That power was still hers-hers to be used for her edification- hers to be recalled if abused or turned to her destruction. It never can cease to be the Church's duty to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. No circumstances, no formality, no claim of office can ever relieve her from that obligation. But this implies that she has ever the right of calling to account or deposing from office those who violate the tacit condition of their appointment, and defeat its great end. Without this [535] [536]

²Dorner, vol. 1, pp. 172-175.

the Church would have no power of reforming herself; once corrupt, her cure would be hopeless; once enslaved, her bondage would be eternal.

From the consideration of these principles Luther advanced to the actual work of construction. He called the princes to his aid as his fellow-labourers in this matter. This was a departure in some measure from his theory, for undoubtedly that theory, legitimately applied, would have permitted none to take part in ecclesiastical arrangements and appointments save those who were members of the Church. But Luther had not thought deeply on the question touching the limits of the respective provinces of Church and State, or on how far the civil authority may go in enacting ecclesiastical arrangements, and planting a country with the ordinances of the Gospel. No one in that day had very clear or decided views on this point. Luther, in committing the organising of the Church so largely into the hands of the princes, yielded to a necessity of the times. Besides, it is to be borne in mind that the princes were, in a sense, members of the Church; that they were not less prominent by their religious intelligence and zeal than by their official position, and that if Zwingle, who had more stringent opinions on the point of limiting Church action to Church agencies than Luther, made the Council of Two Hundred the representative of the Church in Zurich, the latter might be held excusable in making the princes the representative of the Church in Germany, more especially when so many of the common people were as yet too ignorant or too indifferent to take part in the matter.

On the 22nd October, 1526, Luther moved the Elector John of Saxony to issue a commission of visitation of his dominions, in order to the reinstatement of the Church, that of Rome being now abolished. Authorized by the elector, four commissioners began the work of Church visitation. Two were empowered to inquire into the temporalities of the Church, and two into her ecclesiastical condition, touching schools, doctrine, pastors. The paper of instructions, or plan according to which the Church in the Electorate of Saxony was to be reinstated, was drawn up by Melancthon.

Luther, Melancthon, Spalatin, and Thuring were the four chief commissioners, to each of whom colleagues, lay and clerical, were

attached. To Luther was assigned the electorate; the others visited the provinces of Altenburg, Thuringia, and Franconia

Much ignorance, many errors and mistakes, innumerable abuses and anomalies did the visitation bring to light. The Augean stable into which the Papacy had converted Germany, not less than the rest of Christendom, was not to be cleansed in a day. All that could be done was to make a beginning, and even that required infinite tact and firmness, great wisdom and faith. From the living waters of the sanctuary only could a real purification be looked for, and the care of the visitors was to open channels, or remove obstructions, that this cleansing current might freely pervade the land.

Ministers were chosen, consistories were appointed, ignorant and immoral pastors were removed, but provided for. In some cases priests were met with who were trying to serve both Rome and the Reformation. In one church they had a pulpit from which they preached the doctrines of free grace, in another an altar at which they used to say mass. The visitors put an end to such dualisms. The doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers did not comport, Luther thought, with a difference of grade among the ministers of the Gospel, but the pastors of the greater cities were appointed, under the title of superintendents, to supervise the others, and to watch over both congregations and schools.

The one great want everywhere, Luther found to be want of knowledge. He set himself to remedy the deficiency by compiling popular manuals of the Reformed doctrine, and by issuing plain instructions to the preachers to qualify them more fully for teaching their flocks. He was at pains, especially, to show them the indissoluble link between the doctrine of a free justification and holiness of life. His "Larger and Smaller Catechisms," which he published at this time, were among the most valuable fruits of the Church visitation. By spreading widely the truth they did much to root the Reformation among the people, and to rear a bulwark against the return of Popery.

Armed with the authority of the elector, the visitors suppressed the convents; the inmates were restored to society, the buildings were converted into schools and hospitals, and the property was divided between the maintenance of public worship and national

uses. Ministers were encouraged to marry, and their families became centers of moral and intellectual life throughout the Fatherland.

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The plan of Church reform, as drawn by Melancthon, was a retrogression. As he wrote, he saw on the one hand the fanatics, on the other a possible re-approachment, at a future day, to Rome, and he framed his instructions in a conservative spirit. The antagonistic points in the Reformation doctrine he discreetly veiled; and as regarded the worship of the Church, he aimed at conserving as much and altering as little as possible. ³ Some called this moderation, others termed it trimming; the Romanists thought that the Reformation troops had begun their march back; the Wittenbergers were not without a suspicion of treachery. Luther would have gone further; for he grasped too thoroughly the radical difference between Rome and Wittenberg to believe that these two would ever again be one; but when he reflected on the sincerity of Melancthon, and his honest desire to guard the Reformation on all sides, he was content.

So far as the forms of worship and the aspect of the churches were concerned, the change resulting from this visitation was not of a marked kind. The Latin liturgy was retained, with a mixture of Lutheran hymns. The altar still stood, though now termed the table; the same toleration was vouchsafed the images, which continued to occupy their niches; vestments and lighted tapers were still made use of, especially in the rural churches. The great towns, such as Nuremberg, Ulm, Strasburg, and others, purged their temples of a machinery more necessary in the histrionic worship of Rome than in that of the Reformation. "There is no evil in these things," ⁴ said Melancthon, "they will do no harm to the worshipper;" but the soundness of his inference is open to question. With all these drawbacks this visitation resulted in great good. The organisation now given the Church permitted a combination of her forces. She could henceforth more effectually resist the attacks of Rome. Besides, at the center of this organization was placed the preaching of the Word as the main instrumentality. That great light shone apace, and the tolerated superstitions faded away. A new face began to appear on Germany.

³Corpus Ref., 2, 990-D'Aubigne, vol. 4, p. 35.

⁴Corpus Ref.-D'Aubigne, vol. 4, p. 35.

On the model of the Church of Saxony, were the Churches of the other German States re-constituted. Franconia, Luneburg, East Friesland, Schleswig and Holstein, Silesia, and Prussia received Reformed constitutions by the joint action of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

The same course was pursued in many of the principal cities of the German Empire. Their inhabitants had received the Reformation with open arms, and were eager to abolish all the traces of Romish domination. The more intelligent and free the city, the more thoroughly was this Reformation carried out. Nuremberg, Augsburg, Ulm, Strasburg, Brunswick, Hamburg, Bremen, Magdeburg, and others placed themselves in the list of the Reformed cities, without even availing themselves of the permission given them by Melancthon of halting at a middle stage in this Reformation. We have the torch of the Bible, said they, in our churches, and have no need of the light of a taper.

Chapter 13: Constitution of the Church of Hesse

Francis Lambert-Quits his Monastery at Avignon-Comes to Zurich- Goes on to Germany-Luther Recommends him to Landgrave Philip- Invited to frame a Constitution for the Church of Hesse-His Paradoxes-The Priest's Commentary-Discussion at Homburg-The Hessian Church constituted-Its Simplicity-Contrast to Romish Organization-General Ends gained by Visitation-Moderation of Luther-Monks and Nuns-Stipends of Protestant Pastors-Luther's Instructions to them-Deplorable Ignorance of German Peasantry- Luther's Smaller and Larger Catechisms-Their Effects

Picture: View in Barcelona

Hesse was an exception, not in lagging behind, but in going before the others. This principality enjoyed the labours of a remarkable man. Francis Lambert had read the writings of Luther in his cell at Avignon. His eyes opened to the light, and he fled. Mounted on an ass, his feet almost touching the ground, for he was tall as well as thin, wearing the grey gown of the Franciscans, gathered round his waist with the cord of the order, he traversed in this fashion the countries of Switzerland and Germany, preaching by the way, till at last he reached Wittemberg, and presented himself before Luther.

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Charmed with the decision of his character and the clearness of his knowledge, the Reformer brought the Franciscan under the notice of Philip of Hesse. Between the thorough-going ex-monk and the chivalrous and resolute landgrave, there were not a few points of similarity fitted to cement them in a common action for the good of the Church. Francis was invited by the landgrave to frame a constitution for the Churches of Hesse. Nothing loth, Lambert set to work, and in one hundred and fifty-eight "Paradoxes" produced a basis broad enough to permit of every member exercising his influence in the government of the Church.

We are amazed to find these propositions coming out of a French cell. The monk verily must have studied other books than his breviary. What a sudden illumination was it that dispelled the darkness around the disciples of the sixteenth century! Passing, in respect of their spiritual knowledge, from night to noon-day, without an intervening twilight, what a contrast do they present to nearly all those who in after-days left the Romish Communion to enroll themselves in the Protestant ranks! Were the intellects of the men of that age more penetrating or was the Spirit more largely given? But to pass on to the propositions of the ex-monk.

Conforming to a custom which had been an established one since the days of the Emperor Justinian, who published his Pandects in the Churches, Francis Lambert, of Avignon, nailed up his "Paradoxes" on the church doors of Hesse. Scarce were they exposed to the public gaze, when eager hands were stretched out to tear them down. Not so, however, for others and friendly ones are uplifted to defend them from desecration. "Let them be read," say several voices. A young priest fetches a stool-mounts it; the crowd keep silence, and the priest reads aloud.

"All that is deformed ought to be reformed." So ran the first Paradox. It needed, thinks Boniface Dornemann, the priest who acted as reader, no runagate monk, no "spirit from the vasty depth" of Lutheranism to tell us this.

"The Word of God is the rule of all true Reformation," says Paradox second. That may be granted as part of the truth, thinks priest Dornemann, but it looks askance on tradition and on the infallibility of the Church. Still, with a Council to interpret the Bible, it may pass.

The crowd listens and he reads Paradox the third. "It belongs to the Church to judge on matters of faith." Now the ex-monk has found the right road, doubtless thinks Dornemann, and bids fair to follow it. The Church is the judge.

"The Church is the congregation of those who are united by the same spirit, the same faith, the same God, the same Mediator, the same Word, by which alone they are governed." So runs Paradox the fourth. A dangerous leap! thinks the priest; the ex-monk clears tradition and the Fathers at a bound. He will have some difficulty in finding his way back to the orthodox path.

The priest proceeds to Paradox fifth. “The Word is the true key. The kingdom of heaven is open to him who believes the Word, and shut against him who believes it not. Whoever, therefore, truly possesses the power of the Word of God, has the power of the keys.” The ex-monk, thinks Dornemann, upsets the Pope’s throne in the little clause that gives right to the Word alone to govern.

“Since the priesthood of the law has been abolished,” says the sixth proposition, “Christ is the only immortal and eternal Priest; and he does not, like men, need a successor.” There goes the whole hierarchy of priests. Not an altar, not a mass in all Christendom that this proposition does not sweep away. Tradition, Councils, Popes, and now priests, all are gone, and what is left in their room? Let us read proposition seventh.

“All Christians, since the commencement of the Church, have been and are participators in Christ’s priesthood.” The monk’s Paradoxes are opening the flood-gates to drown the Church and world in a torrent of democracy. ¹

At that moment the stool was pulled from under the feet of the priest, and, tumbling in the dust, his public reading was suddenly brought to an end. We have heard enough, however; we see the ground plan of the spiritual temple; the basis is broad enough to sustain a very lofty structure. Not a select few only, but all believers, are to be built as living stones into this “holy house.” With the ex-Franciscan of Avignon, as with the ex-Augustinian of Wittenberg, the corner-stone of the Church’s organization is the “universal priesthood” of believers.

[539] This was a catholicity of which that Church which claims catholicity as her exclusive possession knew nothing. The Church of Rome had lodged all priesthood primarily in one man, St. Peter—that is, in the Pope—and only a select few, who were linked to him by a mysterious chain, were permitted to share in it. What was the consequence? Why, this, that one part of the Church was dependent upon another part for salvation; and instead of a heavenly society, all whose members were enfranchised in an equal privilege and a common dignity, and all of whom were engaged in offering the same spiritual sacrifices of praise and obedience, the Church was parted

¹Paradoxa Lamberti-Scultet, Annal.

into two great classes; there were the oligarchs and there were the serfs; the first were holy, the others were profane; the first monopolized all blessings, and the others were their debtors for such gifts as they chose to dole out to them.

The two ex-monks, Luther and Lambert, put an end to this state of things. They abolished the one priest, plucking from his brow his impious mitre, and from his hands his blasphemous sacrifice, and they put the one Eternal Priest in heaven in his room. Instead of the hierarchy whose reservoir of power was on the Seven Hills, whence it was conveyed downward through a mystic chain that linked all other priests to the Pope, much as the cable conveys the electric spark from continent to continent, they restored the universal priesthood of believers. Their fountain of power is in heaven; faith like a chain links them to it; the Holy Spirit is the oil with which they are anointed; and the sacrifices they present are not those of expiation, which has been accomplished once for all by the Eternal Priest, but of hearts purified by faith, and lives which the same divine grace makes fruitful in holiness. This was a great revolution. An ancient and established order was abolished; an entirely different one was introduced. Who gave them authority to make this change? That same apostle, they answered, which the Church of Rome had made her chief and corner-stone. St. Peter, said the Church of Rome, is the one priest: he is the reservoir of all priesthood. But St. Peter himself had taught a very different doctrine; speaking, not through his successor at Rome, but in his own person, and addressing all believers, he had said, "Ye are a royal priesthood." So then that apostle, whom Romanists represented as concentrating the whole priestly function in himself, had made the most unreserved and universal distribution of it among the members of the Church.

In this passage we hear a Divine voice speaking, and calling into being another society than a merely natural one. We behold the Church coming into existence, and the same Word that summons her forth invests her in her powers and functions. In her cradle she is pronounced to be "royal" and "holy." Her charter includes two powers, the power of spiritual government and the power of holy service. These are lodged in the whole body of believers, but the exercise of them is not the right of all, but the right only of the fittest, whom the rest are to call to preside over them in the

exercise of powers which are not theirs, but the property of the whole body. Such were the conclusions of Luther and the ex-Franciscan of Avignon; and the latter now proceeded to give effect to these general principles in the organization of the Church of Hesse.

But first he must submit his propositions to the authorities ecclesiastical and civil of Hesse, and if possible obtain their acceptance of them. The Landgrave Philip issued his summons, and on the 21st October knights and counts, prelates and pastors, with deputies from the towns, assembled in the Church of Homburg, to discuss the propositions of Lambert. The Romish party vehemently assailed the Paradoxes; with equal vigor Lambert defended them. His eloquence silenced every opponent, and after three days' discussion his propositions were carried, and the Churches of Hesse constituted in accordance therewith.

The Church constitution of Hesse is the first to which the Reformation gave birth; it was framed in the hope that it might be a model to others, and it differs in some important points from all of subsequent enactment in Germany. It took its origin exclusively from the Church; its authority was derived from the same quarter; for in its enactment mention was made neither of State nor of landgrave, and it was worked by a Church agency. Every member of the Church, of competent learning and piety, was eligible to the ministerial office; each congregation was to choose its own pastor. The pastors were all equal; they were to be ordained by the laying on of the hands of three others; they were to meet with their congregations every Sabbath for the exercise of discipline; and an annual synod was to supervise the whole body. The constitution of the Hessian Church very closely resembled that which was afterwards adopted in Switzerland and Scotland.² But it was hardly to be expected that it should retain its popular vigor in the midst of Churches constituted on the Institutions of Melancthon; the State gradually encroached upon its liberties, and in 1528 it was remodelled upon the principles of the Church constitutions of Saxony.³

²See details of the Hessian Church constitution in D' Aubigne, vol. 4, pp. 24-30, taken from the *Moumenta Hassiaca*, vol. 2, p. 588.

³J. H. Kurtz, D.D., *Hi.st. of the Christian Church*, p. 30; Edin., 1864.

Such were the labours that occupied the three years during which the winds were held that they should not blow on the young vine which was now beginning to stretch its boughs over Christendom.

This visitation marks a new epoch in the history of Protestantism. [540] Hitherto, the Reformation had been simply a principle, standing unembodied before its opponents, and fighting at great disadvantage against an established and organised system. It was no longer so. It was not less a spiritual principle than before, but it had now found a body in which to dwell, and through which to act. It could now wield all the appliances that organization gives for combining and directing its efforts, and making its presence seen and its power felt by men. This organization it did not borrow from tradition, or from the existing hierarchy, which bore a too close resemblance to that of the pagan temples, but from the pages of the New Testament, finding its models whence it had drawn its doctrines. It was the purity of apostolic doctrine, equipped in the simplicity of apostolic organization. Thus it disposed of the claims of the Romish Church to antiquity by attesting itself as more ancient than it. But though ancient, it was not like Rome borne down by the corruptions and decrepitudes of age; it had the innate celestial vigor of the primitive Church whose representative it claimed to be. Young itself, it promised to bestow a second youth on the world.

Besides the main object of this visitation, which was the planting of churches, a number of subsidiary but still important ends were gained. We are struck, first of all, by the new light in which this visitation presents the character of the Reformer. Luther as a controversialist and Luther as an administrator seem two different men. In debate the Reformer sweeps the field with an impetuosity that clears his path of every obstruction, and with an indignation that scathes and burns up every sophist and every sophism which his logic has overturned. But when he goes forth on this tour of visitation we hardly know him. He clothes himself with considerateness, with tenderness, and even with pity. He is afraid of going too far, and in some cases he leaves it open to question whether he has gone far enough. He is calm-nay, cautious -treading softly lest unwittingly he should trample on a prejudice that is honestly entertained, or hurt the feelings of any weak brother, or do an act of injustice or severity to any one. The revenues of the abbeys and cathedrals he touches

no further than to order that they shall contribute a yearly sum for the salaries of the parish ministers, and the support of the schools. Vacant benefices, of course, he appropriates; here no personal plea appeals to his commiseration. Obstinate Romanists find forbearance at his hands. There was a clause in the Visitation Act which, had he chosen to enforce it, would have enabled him to banish such from Saxony; but in several instances he pleads for them with the elector, representing that it would be wiser policy to let them alone, than to drive them into other countries, where their opportunities of mischief would be greater.⁴ If indulgent to this class, he could not be other than beneficent to nuns and monks. He remembered that he had been a monk himself. Nuns, in many instances, were left in their convents, and old monks in their chimney-corners, with a sufficient maintenance for the rest of their lives. “Commended to God”⁵ was the phrase by which he designated this class, and which showed that he left to time and the teaching of the Spirit the dissolution of the conventual vow, and the casting-off of the monastic cowl. To expel the nun from her cell, and strip the monk of his frock, while the fetter remained on the soul, was to leave them captives still. It was a Higher who had been anointed to “proclaim liberty to the captive and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

Not less considerate were his instructions to preachers. He counselled a moderate and wise course in the pulpit, befitting the exigencies of the age. They were to go forth into the wilderness that Christendom had become with the doctrine of the Baptist, “Repent.” But in their preaching they were never to disjoin Repentance from Faith. These were two graces which worked together in a golden yoke; in vain would the former pour out her tears, unless the latter was near with her pardon. There was forgiveness, not in the confessor’s box, but in the throne of Christ, but it was only faith that could mount into the skies and bring it down.

In the pulpit they were to occupy themselves with the same truths which the apostles and early evangelists had preached; they were not to fear that the Gospel would lose its power; they “were not to fling stones at Romanism;” the true light would extinguish the false,

⁴“Alibi licentius ageret.” (Letter to John, Duke of Saxony, April 23, 1523-Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 13: Additio 1.)

⁵Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 13; Additio 1.

as the day quenches the luminosity that putrid bodies wear in the darkness.

With the spiritual inability of the will they were to teach the moral freedom of the will; the spiritual incapacity which man has contracted by the Fall was not to be pleaded to the denial of his responsibility. Man can abstain, if he chooses, from lying, from theft, from murder, and from other sins, according to St. Paul's declaration—"The Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law." Man can ask the power of God to cure the impotency of his will; but it was God, not the saints, that men were to supplicate. The pastors were further instructed to administer the Sacrament in both kinds, unless in some exceptional cases, and to inculcate the doctrine of the real presence.

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In his tour, the Reformer was careful to examine the peasantry personally, to ascertain the exact state of their knowledge, and how to shape his instructions. One day, as Mathesius relates, he asked a peasant to repeat the Creed. "I believe in God Almighty—" began the peasant. "Stop," said Luther. "What do you mean by 'Almighty?'" "I cannot tell," replied the man. "Neither can I," said Luther, "nor all the learned men in the world. Only believe that God is thy dear and true Father, and knows, as the All-wise Lord, how to help thee, thy wife, and children, in time of need. That is enough."

Two things this visitation brought to light. First, it showed how very general was the abandonment of the Romish doctrines and ceremonies throughout Saxony; and, secondly, how deplorable the ignorance into which the Church of Rome, despite her rich endowments, her numerous fraternities, and her array of clergy, had permitted the body of the common people to descend. Schools, preachers, the Bible, all withheld. She had made them "naked to their shame." In some respects this made the work of Luther the easier. There was little that was solid to displace. There were no strong convictions to root up: crass ignorance had cleared the ground to his hand. In other respects, this made his work the more difficult; for all had to be built up from the foundations; the very first elements of Divine knowledge had to be instilled into the lower orders. With the higher ranks things were not so bad; with them Lutheranism was more a reality—a distinctly apprehended system of truth—than it had yet come to be with the classes below them. In the Altenburg district of the

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Saxon Electorate, only one nobleman now adhered to the Church of Rome. In the city the Gospel had been preached seven years, and now there were hardly ten men to be found in it who adhered to the Roman Church. ⁶ Of one hundred parishes, only four continued to celebrate mass. ⁷ The priests, abandoning the concubinage in which the Pope had allowed them to live, contracted marriage, in the majority of instances, with those with whom they had previously maintained relations of a less honorable kind. ⁸ Over against these gratifying proofs of the progress of the movement, others of a less satisfactory character had to be placed. The Lutheranism which had superseded the Romanian was, in many instances, interpreted to mean simply a release from the obligation to pay ecclesiastical dues, and to give attendance on church ceremonies. Nor does one wonder that the peasants should so have regarded it, when one recalls the spectacles of oppression which met the eyes of the visitors in their progress: fields abandoned and houses deserted from the pressure of the religious imposts. ⁹ From a people so completely fleeced, and whose ignorance was as great as their penury, the Protestant pastor could expect only inadequate and precarious support. The ministers eked out the miserable contributions of their flocks by cultivating each his little patch of land. While serving their Master in straits, if not in poverty, they saw without a murmur the bulk of the wealthy Popish foundations grasped by the barons, or used by the canons and other ecclesiastics who chose still to remain within the pale of the Roman Church. These hardships, they knew, were the inevitable attendants of the great transition now being effected from one order of things to another. Piety alone could open the fountains of liberality among the people, and piety must be the offspring of knowledge, of true knowledge of the Word of God. Pastors and schools were the want. "Everywhere we find," said Luther, "poverty and penury. The Lord send laborers into His vineyard! Amen." "The face of the Church is everywhere most wretched," he wrote to Spalatin. "Sometimes we have a collection for the poor pastors, who have to till their two acres, which helps them a little. The peasants

⁶Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 13; Additio 1.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

have nothing, and know nothing: they neither pray, confess, nor communicate, as if they were exempted from every religious duty. What an administration, that of the Papistical bishops!”

The Reformer had seen the nakedness of the land: this was the first step toward the remedying of it. The darkness was Cimmerian. He could not have believed, unless he had had personal knowledge of it, how entirely without intellectual and spiritual culture the Church of Rome had left the German peasant. Here was another misdeed for which Rome would have to account at the bar of future ages: nor was this the least of the great crimes of which he held her guilty. Her surpassing pride he already knew: it was proclaimed to the world in the exceeding loftiness of the titles of her Popes. The tyranny of her rule he also knew: it was exhibited in the statutes of her canon law and the edicts of her Councils. Her intolerance stood confessed in the slaughter of the Albigenses and the stake of Huss: her avarice in the ever-multiplying extortions under which Germany groaned, and of which he had had new and recent proofs in the neglected fields and unoccupied dwellings that met his eye on his visitation tour. What her indulgence boxes meant he also knew. But here was another product of the Romish system. It had covered the nations with a darkness so deep that the very idea of a God was almost lost. The closer he came to this state of things, the more appalling and frightful he saw it to be. The German nations were, doubtless, but a sample of the rest of Christendom. It was not Romanism only, but all religion that was on the point of perishing. “If,” said Luther, writing to the Elector of Saxony soon thereafter, “the old state of things had been suffered to reach its natural termination, the world must have fallen to pieces, and Christianity have been turned into Atheism.”¹⁰

The Reformer made haste to drive away the night which had descended on the world. This, in fact, had been the object of his labours ever since he himself had come to the knowledge of the truth; but he now saw more clearly how this was to be done. Accordingly the moment he had ended his visitation and returned to Wittemberg, he sat down, not to write a commentary or a controversial tract, but a catechism for the German peasantry. This manual of rudimentary

¹⁰Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 14, p. 130.

instruction was ready early next spring (1529). It was published in two forms, Shorter and a Larger Catechism. The former comprised a brief and simple exposition of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments, with forms of prayer for night and morning, and grace before and after meals, with a "House-table" or series of Scripture texts for daily use; his Larger Catechism contained a fuller and more elaborate exposition of the same matters. Few of his writings have been more useful.

[543] His Commentaries and other works had enlightened the nobility and instructed the more intelligent of the townspeople; but in his Catechisms the "light was parted" and diffused over the "plains," as it had once been over the "mountain-tops." When the earth is a parched desert, its herbs burned up, it is not the stately river rolling along within its banks that will make the fields to flourish anew. Its floods pass on to the ocean, and the thirsty land, with its drooping and dying plants, tasting not of its waters, continues still to languish. But with the dew or the rain-cloud it is not so. They descend softly, almost unseen and unheard by man, but their effects are mighty. Their myriad drops bathe every flower, penetrate to the roots of every herb, and soon hill and plain are seen smiling in fertility and beauty. So with these rudiments of Divine knowledge, parted in these little books, and sown like the drops of dew, they penetrated the understandings of the populations among which they were cast, and wherever they entered they awoke conscience, they quickened the intellect, and evoked a universal outburst, first of the spiritual activities, and next of the intellectual and political powers; while the nations that enjoyed no such watering lay unquickened, their slumber became deeper every century, till at last they realised their present condition in which they afford to Protestant nations a contrast that is not more melancholy than it is instructive.

Chapter 14: Politics and Prodigies

Wars-Francis I. Violates his Treaty with Charles-The Turk-The Pope and the Emperor again become Friends-Failure of the League of Cognac-Subjection of Italy to Spain-New League between the Pope and the Emperor -Heresy to be Extinguished-A New Diet summoned-Prodigies-Otto Pack-His Story-The Lutheran Princes prepare for War against the Popish Confederates-Luther Interposes- War Averted-Martyrs

Picture: King Ferdinand afterwards Emperor of Germany

Picture: Arrival of King Ferdinand at Spires

While within the inner circle formed by that holy society which we have seen rising there was peace, outside of it, on the open stage of the world, there raged furious storms. Society was convulsed by wars and rumors of wars. Francis I., who had obtained his liberty by signing the Treaty of Madrid, was no sooner back in France, breathing its air and inhaling the incense of the Louvre, than he declared the conditions which had opened to him escape from captivity intolerable, and made no secret of his intention to violate them. He applied to the Pope for a dispensation from them. The Pope, now at open feud with the emperor, released Francis from his obligations. This kindled anew the flames of war in Europe. The French king, instead of marching under the banner of Charles, and fighting for the extinction of heresy, as he had solemnly bound himself to do, got together his soldiers, and sent them across the Alps to attack the emperor in Italy. Charles, in consequence, had to fight over again for the possessions in the peninsula, which the victory of Pavia he believed had securely given him. In another quarter trouble arose. Henry of England, who till now had been on the most friendly terms with the emperor, having moved in the matter of his divorce from his queen, Catherine, the emperor's aunt, was also sending hostile messages to the Spanish monarch. To complete the embroilment, the Turk was thundering at the gates of Austria, and

threatening to march right into the heart of Christendom. Passing Vienna, Suleiman was pouring his hordes into Hungary; he had slain Louis, the king of that country, in the terrible battle of Mohacz; and the Arch-Duke Ferdinand of Austria, leaving the Reformers at liberty to prosecute their work of upbuilding, had suddenly quitted the Diet of Spires and gone to contest on many a bloody field his claim to the now vacant throne of Hungary. On every side the sword was busy. Armies were continually on the march; cities were being besieged; Europe was a sea on whose bosom the great winds from the four quarters of the heavens were contending in all their fury.

Continual perplexity was the lot of the monarchs of that age. But all their perplexities grew out of that mysterious movement which was springing up in the midst of them, and which possessed the strange, and to them terrible, faculty of converting everything that was meant for its harm into the means of its advancement. The uneasiness of the monarchs was shown in their continual shiftings. Scarcely had one combination been formed, when it was broken in pieces, and another and a different one put in its place. We have just seen the Pope and the emperor at feud. We again behold them [544] becoming confederates, and joining their swords, so recently pointed at each other, for the extinction of the heresy of Wittemberg. The train of political events by which this came about may be told in a few words.

The expedition of the French king into Italy, in violation, as we have seen, of the Treaty of Madrid, was at first successful. His general, Lautrec, sweeping down from the Alps, took the cities of Alessandria and Pavia. At the latter place Francis I. had been defeated and made captive, and his soldiers, with a cruelty that disgraced themselves more than it avenged their master, plundered it, having first put its inhabitants to the sword. Lautrec crossed the Apennines, intending to continue his march to Rome, and open the doors of the Castle of St. Angelo, where Clement VII. still remained shut up. The Pope meanwhile, having paid the first instalment of a ransom of 400,000 crowns, and having but little hope of being able to pay the remainder, wearied with his imprisonment, disguised himself as a merchant, and escaped, with a single attendant, to Orvieto. The French general pressed on to Naples, only to find that victory had forsaken his banners. Smitten by the plague rather than

the Spanish sword, his army melted away, his conquests came to nothing, and the emperor finally recovered his power both in Naples and Lombardy, and again became unchallenged master of Italy, to the terror of the Pope and the chagrin of the Italians. Thus the war which Italy had commenced under the auspices of Clement VII., and the vague aspirations of the Renaissance, for the purpose of raising itself to the rank of an independent sovereignty, ended in its thorough subjection to the foreigner, not again to know emancipation or freedom till our own times, when independence dawned upon it in 1848, and was consummated in 1870, when the Italian troops, under the broad aegis of the new German Empire, entered Rome, and Victor Emmanuel was installed in the Quirinal as monarch from the Alps to Sicily.

Thus the League of Cognac had utterly failed; the last hopes of the Renaissance expired; and Charles once more was master.

Finding that the emperor was the stronger, the Pope tacked about, cast Francis I. overboard, and gave his hand to Charles V. The emperor's ambition had alarmed the Pontiff aforesaid; he was now stronger than ever. The pope consoled himself by reflecting that Charles was a devoted son of Catholicism, and that the power which he had not the strength to curb he had the craft to use.

Accordingly, on the 29th June, 1528, Clement concluded a peace with the emperor at Barcelona, on the promise that Charles would do his utmost to root out that nest of heretics which had been formed at Wittemberg, and to exalt the dominion and glory of the Roman See. ¹

The moment seemed opportune for finishing with heresy. Italy was now at the feet of the emperor; Francis I. and his kingdom had been chastised, and were not likely soon again to appear in arms on the south of the Alps; the tide of Turkish invasion had been rolled back; the Pope was again the friend of the emperor, and all things seemed to invite Charles to all enterprise which he had been compelled to postpone, and at times to dissemble, but which he had never abandoned.

It was not his intention, however, to draw the sword in the first instance. Charles was naturally humane; and though intent on the

¹Ranke, vol. 1, p. 84.

extinction of the Reformed movement, foreseeing that it would infallibly break up his vast Empire, he preferred accomplishing his purpose by policy, if that were possible. He would convoke a Diet: he would get the Wittenberg heresy condemned, in which case he hoped that the majority of the princes would go along with him, and that the leaders of the Protestant movement would defer to this display of moral power. If still they should prove intractable, why, then he would employ force; but in that case, he argued, the blame would not lie at his door. The emperor, by letters dated Valladolid, August 1st, 1528, convoked a Diet to meet at Spires, on the 21st February, 1529.²

Meanwhile, vague rumors of what was on the carpet reached the Reformers in Germany. They looked with apprehension to the future. Other things helped to deepen these gloomy forebodings. The natural atmosphere would seem to have been not less deranged than the political. Portentous meteors shot athwart the sky, marking their path in lines of fire, and affrighting men with their horrid noise. The hyperborean lights, in sudden bursts and flashing lines, like squadrons rushing to combat, illumined the nocturnal heavens. Rivers rising in flood overflowed their banks, and meadows, corn-fields, and in some instances whole provinces, lay drowned beneath their waters. Great winds tore up ancient trees; and, as if the pillars of the world were growing feeble and toppling, earthquakes shook kingdoms, and engulfed castles and towns. "Behold," said the men who witnessed these occurrences, "Behold the prognostics of the dire calamities which are about to overwhelm the world." Even Luther partook of the general terror.

[545] "Dr. Hess," says he, writes me word that in December last the whole heavens were seen on fire above the Church of Breslau, and another day there were witnessed, in the same place, two circles of fire, one within the other, and in the center of them a blazing pillar. These signs announce, it is my firm opinion, the approach of the Last Day... The Roman Empire tends nearly to its ruin; the Turk has attained the summit of his power; the Papal splendour is fast

²Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 115.

becoming eclipsed; the world cracks in every direction as though about to fall in pieces.”³

While so many real dangers disturbed the age, a spurious or doubtful one had wellnigh precipitated the Reformation upon its ruin. A nobleman of Misnia, Otto Pack by name—a greedy, dissipated, and intriguing character, who had been some time vice-chancellor to Duke George of Saxony—came one day to Philip, the Landgrave of Hesse, and, looking grave, professed to be in possession of a terrible secret, which much concerned him and his Lutheran confederate, the Elector of Saxony.⁴ On being pressed to explain himself, he declared his readiness, on payment of a certain sum, to reveal all. The landgrave’s fears being thoroughly aroused, he agreed to pay the man the reward demanded. Pack went on to say that a diabolical plot had been hatched among the Popish princes, headed by the Archduke Ferdinand, to attack by arms the two heretical princes, John of Saxony and Philip of Hesse, strip them of their territories, seize upon Luther and all his followers, and, having disposed of them by summary means, to re-establish the ancient worship.⁵

Pack was unable to show to the landgrave the original of this atrocious league, but he produced what bore to be a copy, and which, having attached to it all the ducal and electoral seals, wore every appearance of being authentic, and the document convinced the landgrave that Pack’s story was true.

Astounded at the danger thus strangely disclosed, and deeming that they had not a moment to lose before the mine exploded, the elector and the landgrave hastily raised an army to avert from themselves and their subjects what they believed to be impending destruction. The two princes entered into a formal compact (March 9th, 1528) “to protect with body, dignity, and possession, and every means in their power, the sacred deposit of God’s word for themselves and their subjects.”

They next looked around for allies. They hoped through the Duke of Prussia to incite the King of Poland against Ferdinand of Austria, and to keep the Franconian bishops in check by the arms of George of Brandenburg. They reckoned on having as auxiliaries

³Werk., 9, 542. Michelet, Luther, p. 210.

⁴Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 13, p. 94.

⁵Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 114.

the Dukes of Luneburg, Pomerania, Mecklenburg, and the city of Magdeburg. For themselves they agreed to equip a force of 6,000 cavalry, and 20,000 infantry. ⁶ They had in view also a league with the King of Denmark. They resolved to anticipate their opponents by striking the first blow. All Germany was in commotion. It was now the turn of the Popish princes to tremble. The Reformers were flying to arms, and before their own preparations could be finished, they would be assailed by an overwhelming host, set on by the startling rumors of the savage plot, formed to exterminate them. The Reformation was on the point of being dragged into the battle-field. Luther shuddered when he saw what was about to happen. He stood up manfully before the two chiefs who were hurrying the movement into this fatal path, and though he believed in the reality of the plot, despite the indignant denial of Duke George and the Popish princes, he charged the elector and landgrave not to strike the first blow, but to wait till they had been attacked. "There is strife enough uninvited," said he, "and it cannot be well to paint the devil over the door, or ask him to be godfather. Battle never wins much, but always loses much, and hazards all; meekness loses nothing, hazards little, and wins all."

Luther's counsels ultimately prevailed, time was given for reflection, and thus the Lutheran princes were saved from the tremendous error which would have brought after it, not triumph, but destruction.

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Meanwhile the Reformation was winning victories a hundred times more glorious than any that armed hosts could have achieved for it. One martyr is worth more than a thousand soldiers. Such were the champions the Reformation was now sending forth. Such were the proofs it now began to give of its prowess-better, surely, than fields heaped with the slain, which even the worst of causes can show.

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⁶Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 13, pp. 95-98.

⁷See details in Sleidan, bk. 6; Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 13; D'Aubigne, bk 8, chap. 4; Michelet, Luther, bk. 3, chap. 1. Some mystery rests on this affair still, but when we take into account the league formed at Ratisbon four years before, the principles and practices of the men at whose door this design was laid, and the fact that the most of the Popish princes agreed to pay a large sum as an indemnity to the Lutheran princes for the expense to which they had been put in raising armaments to defend themselves, we may

In Bavaria, Leonard Caspar at this time sealed his testimony with his blood. He was apprehended at the instance of the Bishop of Passau, and condemned for maintaining that man is justified by faith alone; that there are but two Sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper; that the mass is not a sacrifice, and avails not for the quick and the dead; and that Christ alone hath made satisfaction for us.⁸ In Bavaria, where the Reformed doctrines dared not be preached, no better way could the bishop have taken for promulgating them than by burning this man for holding them. At Munich, George Carpenter was led to the stake for denying that the baptism of water can by its inherent virtue save men. "When you are in the fire," said his friends, "give us a token that you abide steadfast." "So long," replied he, "as I am able to open my mouth I will confess my Savior."⁹ The executioner took him and bound him, and cast him into the flames. "Jesus, Jesus!" exclaimed the martyr. The executioner, with an iron hook, turned him round and round amid the blazing coals. "Jesus, Jesus!"

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the martyr continued to exclaim, and so confessing the name of his Lord he gave up the ghost in the fire. Thus another blazing torch was kindled in the midst of the darkness of Bavaria.

Other martyrs followed in those German provinces which still owned the jurisdiction of Popish princes. At Landsberg nine persons suffered in the fire, and at Munich twenty-nine were drowned in the Iser. In the case of others the more summary dispatch of the poignard was employed. In the spring of 1527, George Winkler, preacher at Halle, was summoned before Albert, Cardinal of Mainz. Being dismissed from the archbishop's tribunal, he was mounted on the horse of the court fool, and made to set out on his journey homeward. His way led through a forest; suddenly a little troop of horsemen dashed out of the thicket, struck their swords into him, and again plunged into the wood. Booty was plainly not the object of the assassins, for neither money nor other article of value was taken from his person; it was the suspicion of heresy that drew their daggers upon him. Luther hoped that "his murdered blood, like

be disposed to think that Luther's opinion was not far from the truth; that the league if not concluded had been conceived.

⁸Sleidan, bk. 6., p. 110.

⁹Scutlet., 2, 110.

Abel's, might cry to God; or rather be as seed from which other preachers would spring." "The world," said he, "is a tavern, of which Satan is the landlord, and the sign over the doorway is murder and lying." He almost envied these martyrs. "I am," said he, "but a wordy preacher in comparison with these great doers."

In the piles of these martyrs we hear the Reformation saying to the Lutheran princes, some of whom were so eager to help it with their swords, and thought that if they did not fight for it, it must perish, "Dismiss your armed levies. I will provide my own soldiers. I myself will furnish the armor in which they are to do battle; I will gird them with patience, meekness, heroism, and joy; these are the weapons with which they will combat. With these weapons they will break the power, foil the arts, and stain the pride of the enemy."

Chapter 15: The Great Protest

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Diet of 1529-The Assembling of the Popish Princes-Their Numbers and high Hopes-Elector of Saxony-Arrival of Philip of Hesse-The Diet Meets-The Emperor's Message-Shall the Diet Repeal the Edict (1526) of Toleration? -The Debate-A Middle Motion proposed by the Popish Members-This would have Stifled the Reformation in Germany-Passed by a Majority of Votes-The Crisis-Shall the Lutheran Princes Accept it?-Ferdinand hastily Quits the Diet- Protestant Princes Consult together-Their Protest-Their Name- Grandeur of the Issues

Picture: The Elector of Saxony Reading the Protest at the Diet of Spires

Picture: View of Marburg

Such were the times that preceded the meeting of the famous Diet of Spires:-in the sky unusual portents, on the earth the smoke of martyr-piles, kings girding on the sword, and nations disturbed by rumors of intrigue and war, heaving like the ocean before the tempest sets in. Meanwhile the time approached for the Diet to assemble. It had been convoked for February, but was not able to meet till the middle of March. At no former Diet had the attendance, especially on the Catholic side, been so numerous. ¹ The Popish princes came first. The little town was all astir as each magnate announced his arrival at its gates, and rode through its streets, followed by an imposing display of armed followers. ² First in rank was King Ferdinand, who was to preside in the absence of his brother Charles V., and came attended by 300 armed knights. After him came the Dukes of Bavaria with an equally large retinue; then followed the ecclesiastical electors of Mainz and Treves, and the Bishops of Trent and Hildesheim, each with a troop of horsemen. ³ Their haughty

¹Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 117.

²Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 14, p. 129.

³Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 115. Footntoe

looks, and the boastful greetings they exchanged with one another, proclaimed the confident hopes they cherished of being able to carry matters in the Diet their own way. They had come to bury the Reformation. ⁴

The last to arrive were the Reformed princes. On the 13th of March came Elector John of Saxony, the most powerful prince of the Empire. His entrance was the most modest of all. There rode by his side none but Melanchthon. ⁵ Philip of Hesse followed on the 18th of March. With characteristic pomp he passed in with sound of trumpet, followed by a troop of 200 horsemen. It was on the eve of Palm Sunday that the elector, with Melanchthon by his side, entered Spire. On the following day he had public worship in his hotel, and as an evidence that the popular favor for the Word of God had not abated, not fewer than 8,000 attended sermon both forenoon and afternoon. ⁶ When the deputies of the cities had arrived, the constituent members of the Diet were complete, and the business was opened.

The Diet was not long left in suspense as to the precise object of the emperor in convoking it, and the legislation which was expected from it. Scarcely had it met when it received the intimation from commissioners that it was the emperor's will and command that the Diet should repeal the Edict of Spire (1526). ⁷ This was all. The members might dispatch their business in an hour, and return in peace to their homes.

But let us see how much was included in this short message, and how much the Diet was asked to do-what a revolution it was bidden inaugurate, when it was asked to repeal the edict of 1526. That edict guaranteed the free exercise of their religion to the several States of the Empire till a General Council should meet. It was, as we have already said, the first legal establishment of the Reformation. Religious freedom, then, so far as enjoyed in Germany, the Diet was now asked to abolish. But this was not all. The edict of 1526 suspended legally the execution of the Edict of Worms of 1521, which proscribed Luther and condemned the Reformation.

⁴Corp. Ref., 1.1040-D'Aubigne, bk 8, chap. 5.

⁵Sleiden, bk. 6, p. 118

⁶Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 14; Additio.

⁷Ibid., p. 129.

Abolish the edict of 1526, and the edict of 1521 would come into operation; Luther must be put to death; the Reformed opinions must be rooted out of all the countries where they had taken root; in short, the floodgates of a measureless persecution would be opened in Germany. This was the import of the curt and haughty message with which Charles startled the Diet at its opening. The sending of such a message even was a violation of the constitutional rights of the several States, and an assumption of power which no former emperor had dared to make. The message, if passed into law, would have laid the rights of conscience, the independence of the Diet, and the liberties of Germany, all three in the dust. [549]

The struggle now began. Shall the Edict of Spires (1526) be repealed? The Popish members of the Diet strenuously insisted that it should at once be repealed. It protected, they affirmed, all kinds of abominable opinions; it fostered the growth of heretical and disloyal communities, meaning the Churches which the three years of peace enjoyed under the edict had permitted to be organised. In short, it was the will of the emperor, and whoever opposed its repeal was not the friend of Charles.

The Reformed princes, on the other side, maintained that this edict was now the constitution of the Empire, that it had been unanimously sworn to by all the members of the Diet; that to repeal it would be a public breach of national faith, and that to the Lutheran princes would remain the right of resisting such a step by force of arms.

The majority of the Diet, though exceedingly anxious to oblige the emperor, felt the force of these strong arguments. They saw that the ground of the oppositionists was a constitutional and legal one. Each principality had the right of regulating its own internal affairs. The faith and worship of their subjects was one of these. But a majority of the Diet now claimed the right to decide that question for each separate State. If they should succeed, it was clear that a new order of things would be introduced into Germany. A central authority would usurp the rights of the local administrations, and the independence of the individual States would be destroyed. To repeal the edict was to inaugurate revolution and war.

They hit on a middle path. They would neither abolish nor enforce the edict of 1526. The Popish members tabled a proposition

in the Diet to the effect that whatever was the law and the practice in the several States at this hour, should continue to be the law and the practice till a General Council should meet. In some of the States the edict of 1521 was the law and the practice; that is, the preaching of the Gospel was forbidden, and its professors were burned. In other States the edict of 1526 was the law and the practice; that is, they acted in the matter of religion as their judgment dictated. The proposition now tabled in the Diet practically meant the maintenance of the status quo in each of the States, with certain very important modifications in those of them that at present enjoyed religious liberty. These modifications were that the Popish hierarchy should be re-established, that the celebration of the mass should be permitted, and that no one should be allowed to abjure Popery and embrace Lutheranism till such time as a Council had met and framed a general arrangement. ⁸

How crafty! This proposition did not exact from a single Protestant a renunciation of his faith. It had no pains and penalties for existing converts. But what of those whom the light might reach afterwards? They must stifle their convictions, or abide the penalty, the dungeon and the stake. And what of States that might wish to throw off the yoke of Rome, and pass over to the side of the Reformation? The proposal, if passed into law, made this impossible. The State no more than the individual dare change its religious profession. The proposal drew a line around the Reformation, and declared that beyond this boundary there must be no advance, and that Lutheranism had reached its utmost limits of development. But not to advance was to recede, and to recede was to die. This proposition, therefore, professedly providing for the maintenance of the Reformation, was cunningly contrived to strangle it. Nevertheless, Ferdinand and the Popish princes and prelates hurried on the measure, which passed the Diet by a majority of votes. ⁹

⁸Pallavicino, lib. 2, cap. 18. Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 118. Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 14, p. 127. The edict contained other articles, such as that Sacramentarians or Zwinglians should be banished from all the lands of the Empire, and that Anabaptists should be punished with death. (Pallavicino, lib. 2, cap. 18.)

⁹The date of this edict is variously given. Seckendorf says it passed on the 4th April; D'Aubigne says the 7th, on the authority of Sleidan, but this is a mistake, for Sleidan gives no date. The continuator of M. Fleury makes the date of the edict the 13th April.

Shall the chiefs of the Reformation submit and accept the edict? How easily might the Reformers at this crisis, which was truly a tremendous one, have argued themselves into a wrong course! How many plausible, pretexts and fair reasons might they have found for submission! The Lutheran princes were guaranteed the free exercise of their religion. The same boon was extended to all those of their subjects who, prior to the passing of the measure, had embraced the Reformed views. Ought not this to content them? How many Perils would submission avoid! On what unknown hazards and conflicts would opposition launch them! Who knows what opportunities the future may bring? Let us embrace peace; let us seize the olive-branch Rome holds out, and close the wounds of Germany.

With arguments like these might the Reformers have justified [550] their adoption of a course which would have assuredly issued in no long time in the overthrow of their cause.

Happily they looked at the principle on which this arrangement was based, and they acted in faith. What was that principle? It was the right of Rome to coerce conscience and forbid free inquiry. But were not themselves and their Protestant subjects to enjoy religious freedom? Yes, as a favor, specially stipulated for in the arrangement, but not as a right. As to all outside that arrangement, the great principle of authority was to rule; conscience was out of court, Rome was infallible judge, and must be obeyed. The acceptance of the proposed arrangement would have been a virtual admission that religious liberty ought to be confined to Reformed Saxony; and as to all the rest of Christendom, free inquiry and the profession of the Reformed faith were crimes, and must be visited with the dungeon and the stake. Could they consent to localise religious liberty? to have it proclaimed that the Reformation had made its last convert? had subjugated its last acre? and that wherever Rome bore sway at this hour, there her dominion was to be perpetuated? Could the Reformers have pleaded that they were innocent of the blood of those hundreds and thousands who, in pursuance of this arrangement, would have to yield up their lives in Popish lands?

Sleidan says that the Protest of the princes against it was read on the 19th April, while Pallavicino makes the date of the edict the 23rd April. The most probable reconciliation of these differences is, that the edict was passed on the 13th April, published on the 23rd, and that the Protest was given in on the 19th.

This would have been to betray, at that supreme hour, the cause of the Gospel, and the liberties of Christendom.

The Reformed members of the Diet-the Lutheran princes and many of the deputies of the cities-assembled for deliberation. The crisis was a momentous one. From the consultations of an hour would come the rising or the falling of the Reformation-liberty or slavery to Christendom. The princes comprehended the gravity of their position. They themselves were to be let alone, but the price they were to pay for this ignominious ease was the denial of the Gospel, and the surrender of the rights of conscience throughout Christendom. They resolved not to adopt so dastardly a course.

The Diet met again on the 18th April. King Ferdinand, its president, eager apparently to see the matter finished, thanked the Diet for voting the proposition, adding that its substance was about to be embodied in an imperial edict, and published throughout the Empire. Turning to the Elector of Saxony and his friends, Ferdinand told them that the Diet had decided; that the resolution was passed, and that now there remained to them nothing but submission to the majority.

The Protestant members, not anticipating so abrupt a termination, retired to an adjoining chamber to frame their answer to this haughty summons. Ferdinand would not wait; despite the entreaty of the elector he left the Diet,¹⁰ nor did he return on the morrow to hear the answer of the Lutheran princes. He had but one word, and he had spoken it-Submit. So, too, said Rome, speaking through his mouth-Submit.

On the morrow, the 19th April, the Diet held its last and fateful meeting.

The Elector of Saxony and his friends entered the hall. The chair was empty, Ferdinand being gone; but that took neither from the validity nor from the moral grandeur of the transaction. The princes knew that they had for audience, not the States now present only, but the emperor, Christendom, and the ages to come.

The elector, for himself, the princes, and the whole body of the Reformed party, now proceeded to read a Declaration, of which the following are the more important passages: -

¹⁰Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 120.

“We cannot consent to its [the edict of 1526] repeal... Because this would be to deny our Lord Jesus Christ, to reject His Holy Word, and thus give Him just reason to deny us before His Father, as He has threatened... Moreover, the new edict declaring the ministers shall preach the Gospel, explaining it according to the writings accepted by the holy Christian Church; we think that, for this regulation to have any value, we should first agree on what is meant by the true and holy Church. Now seeing that there is great diversity of opinion in this respect; that there is no sure doctrine but such as is conformable to the Word of God: that the Lord forbids the teaching of any other doctrine; that each text of the Holy Scriptures ought to be explained by other and clearer texts; that this holy book is in all things necessary for the Christian, easy of understanding, and calculated to scatter the darkness: we are resolved, with the grace of God, to maintain the pure and exclusive preaching of His Holy Word, such as it is contained in the Biblical books of the Old and New Testament, without adding anything thereto that may be contrary to it. This Word is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life, and can never fail or deceive us. He who builds on this foundation shall stand against all the powers of hell, whilst all the human vanities that are set up against it shall fall before the face of God.

“For these reasons, most dear lords, uncles, cousins, and friends, we earnestly entreat you to weigh carefully our grievances and our motives. If you do not yield to our request, we protest by these presents, before God, our only Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Savior, and who will one day be our Judge, as well as before all men and all creatures, that we, for us and for our people, neither consent nor adhere in any manner whatsoever to the proposed decree, in anything that is contrary to God, to His Holy Word, to our right conscience, to the salvation of our souls, and to the last decree of Spires.”

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This protest, when we consider the long dominancy and formidable character of the tyranny to which it was opposed, and the lofty nature and vast range of the rights and liberties which it claimed, is one of the grandest documents in all history, and marks an epoch in the progress of the human race second only to that of Christianity itself.

At Worms, Luther stood alone; at Spires, the one man has grown into a host. The “No” so courageously uttered by the monk in 1521 is now in 1529 taken up and repeated by princes, cities, and nations. Its echoes travel onwards, till at last their murmurs are heard in the palaces of Barcelona and the basilicas of Rome. Eight years ago the Reformation was simply a doctrine, now it is an organization, a Church. This little seed, which on its first germination appeared the smallest of all seeds, and which Popes, doctors, and princes beheld with contempt, is a tree, whose boughs, stretched wide in air, cover nations with their shadow.

The princes renewed their Protest at the last sitting of the Diet, Saturday, 24th April. It was subscribed by John, Elector of Saxony; Philip, Landgrave of Hesse; George, Margrave of Brandenburg; Ernest and Francis, Dukes of Luneburg, and the Count of Anhalt. Some of the chief cities joined the princes in their protestation, as Strasburg, Nuremberg, Ulm, Constance, Reutlingen, Windsheim, Lindau, Kempten, Memmingen, Nordlingen, Heilbronn, Isny, St. Gall, and Weissenburg. ¹¹ From that day the Reformers were called Protestants. ¹²

One the following Sabbath, 25th April, the chancellors of the princes and of the Protestant cities, with two notaries and several witnesses, met in a small house in St. John’s Lane, belonging to Peter Muterstatt, Deacon of St. John’s, ¹³ to draw up an appeal. In that document they recite all that had passed at the Diet, and they protest against its decree, for themselves, their subjects, and all who receive or shall hereafter receive the Gospel, and appeal to the emperor, and to a free and general Council of Christendom. ¹⁴ On the morning after their appeal, the 26th, the princes left Spires. This sudden departure was significant. It proclaimed to all men the firmness of their resolve. Ferdinand had spoken his last word and was gone. They, too, had spoken theirs, and were gone also. Rome hoists her flag; over against hers the Protestants display theirs; henceforward there are two camps in Christendom.

¹¹Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 120.

¹²Pallavicino thinks that they would have been more truly named had they been called “Rebels against the Pope and Caesar”-*Ribella al Papa ed al Cesare* (lib. 2, cap. 18).

¹³D’Aubigne, bk 8, chap. 6.

¹⁴Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 120. D’Aubigne, bk 8, chap. 6.

Even Luther did not perceive the importance of what had been done. The Diet he thought had ended in nothing. It often happens that the greatest events wear the guise of insignificance, and that grand eras are ushered in with silence. Than the principle put forth in the protest of the 19th April, 1529, it is impossible to imagine one that could more completely shield all rights, and afford a wider scope for development. Its legitimate fruit must necessarily be liberty, civil and religious. What was that principle? This Protest overthrew the lordship of man in religious affairs, and substituted the authority of God. But it did this in so simple and natural a way, and with such an avoidance of all high-sounding phraseology, that men could not see the grandeur of what was done, nor the potency of the principle. The protesters assumed the Bible to be the Word of God, and that every man ought to be left at liberty to obey it. This modest affirmation falls on our ear as an almost insipidity. Compared with some modern charters of rights, and recent declarations of independence, how poor does it look! Yet let us see how much is in it. "The Word," say the protesters, "is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life;" and "each text of the Holy Scriptures ought to be explained by other and clearer texts." Then what becomes of the pretended infallibility of Rome, in virtue of which she claims the exclusive right of interpreting the Scriptures, and binding down the understanding of man to believe whatever she teaches? It is utterly exploded and overthrown. And what becomes of the emperor's right to compel men with his sword to practise whatever faith the Church enjoins, assuming it to be the true faith, simply because the Church has enjoined it? It too is exploded and overthrown. The principle, then, so quietly lodged in the Protest, lays this two-fold tyranny in the dust. The chair of the Pontiff and the sword of the emperor pass away, and conscience comes in their room. But the Protest does not leave conscience her own mistress; conscience is not a law to herself. That were anarchy-rebellion against Him who is her Lord. The Protest proclaims that the Bible is the law of conscience, and that its Author is her alone Lord. Thus steering its course between the two opposite dangers, avoiding on this hand anarchy, and on that tyranny, Protestantism comes forth unfurling to the eyes of the nations the flag of true liberty. Around that flag must all gather who would be free.

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Of the three centuries that have since elapsed, there is not a year which has not borne its testimony to the essential grandeur and supreme importance of the act, so simple outwardly, done by the princes at Spires. We protest, said they, that God speaking in his Word, and not Rome speaking through her priests, is the One Supreme Law of the human race. The upper springs of Divine influence thus brought to act upon the soul and conscience of man, the nether springs of philosophy, art, and liberty began to flow. The nations that rallied round this Protest are now marching in the van of civilization; those that continued under the flag of Romanism lie benumbed in slavery and are rotting in decay.

Chapter 16: Conference at Marburg

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Landgrave Philip-His Activity-Elector John and Landgrave Philip
the Complement of each other-Philip's Efforts for Union-The One
Point of Disunion among the Protestants-The Sacrament-Luther and
Zwingle-Their Difference-Philip undertakes their
Reconciliation-He proposes a Conference on the Sacrament-Luther
Accepts with difficulty-Marburg-Zwingle's Journey thither-Arrival
of Wittenberg Theologians-Private Discussions -Public
Conference-"This is my Body"-A Figure of Speech-Luther's Carnal
Eating and Spiritual Eating-Ecolampadius and Luther-Zwingle and
Luther-Can a Body be in more Places than One at the Same
Time?-Mathematics-The Fathers-The Conference Ends-The
Division not Healed- Imperiousness of Luther-Grief of
Zwingle-Mortification of Philip of Hesse-The Plague

Picture: Martin Bucer

Picture: Luther and Zwingle Discussing at Marburg

The camp had been pitched, the Protestant flag displayed, and the campaign was about to open. No one then living suspected how long and wasting the conflict would be-the synods that would deliberate, the tomes that would be written, the stakes that would blaze, and the fields on which, alas! the dead would be piled up in ghastly heaps, before that liberty which the protesters had written up on their flag should be secured as the heritage of Christendom. But one thing was obvious to all, and that was the necessity to the Reformers of union among themselves.

Especially did this necessity appeal to Philip, Landgrave of Hesse. This young prince was the most chivalrous of all the knightly adherents of Protestantism. His activity knew no pause. Day and night it was his thought how to strengthen the Protestant front. Unite, fall into one army, and march as a united phalanx against the foe, was the advice he was constantly urging upon the Protestants. And certainly, in the prospect of such combinations as were now forming

for their destruction, worse advice might have been given them. But the zeal of the landgrave was not quite to the taste of Luther; it at times alarmed him; his activity took too much a military direction to be altogether wise or safe; the Reformer therefore made it a point to curb it; and it must be confessed that Philip looked more to leagues and arms for the defense and success of the Reformation than to those higher forces that were bearing it onwards, and to that unseen but omnipotent Arm whose interpositions were so visible to Luther in the sudden shiftings of the vast and complicated drama around him.

But with all his defects the landgrave was of great use to the cause. His rough, fiery, impetuous energy was fitted for the times. In truth, the Elector John and Landgrave Philip were made for each other. John was prudent and somewhat timid; Philip was impulsive and altogether fearless. The same danger that made John hang back, made Philip rush forward. We see in the two an equipoise of opposite qualities, which if brought together in one man would have made a perfect knight. John and Philip were in the political department of the movement what Luther and Melancthon were in the theological and religious. They were the complement of each other.

There was one great division in the Protestant camp. The eye of Philip had long rested upon it with profound regret. Unless speedily healed it would widen with years, and produce, he felt, innumerable mischiefs in time to come. One circumstance in connection with this division encouraged hope; it existed on only one point—the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. On all the great fundamental truths of revelation the whole body of the Protestants were at one—on the origin of salvation, the grace of God; the accomplishment of salvation, the atoning death of Christ; the bestowal of salvation, the agency of the Holy Spirit; the channels of its conveyance, the Word and Sacraments; and the instrument by which the sinner receives it, faith in the righteousness of Christ—on all these points were the Reformers of Germany and the Refonnors of Switzerland agreed. Along the whole of the royal road of truth could they walk side by side. On one point only did they differ, namely, the manner in which Christ is present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist—corporeally or spiritually? That question parted into two the Sacramental host.

Philip had grieved more over the breach than even Luther and Melancthon. The landgrave believed that at bottom there were not two really different opinions among the disciples of the Gospel, but only one opinion differently apprehended, and variously stated, and that could he bring the leaders together, a free interchange of sentiments and some sifting discussion, would succeed in removing the misapprehension. What a blessed thing to close this gulf! What a gain to unite the chivalry of knightly Germany with the bravery of republican Helvetia—the denizens of the plain with the sons of the mountain! And especially now, when they were waiting for the fiercest onset their foes had yet made upon them. They had just flung their flag upon the winds; they had unfurled it in the face of all Christendom, in the face of Rome; they had said as a body what Luther said as an individual at Worms—“Here we stand; we can do no otherwise, so help us God.” Assuredly the gage would be taken up, and the blow returned, by a power too proud not to feel, and too strong in armies and scaffolds not to resent the defiance. To remain disunited with such a battle in prospect, with such a tempest lowering over them, appeared madness. No doubt the landgrave was mainly anxious to unite the arms of the Protestants; but if Philip labored for this object with a zeal so great, and it must be admitted so praiseworthy, not less anxious ought the Lutheran doctors to have been to unite the hearts and the prayers of the children of the Reform.

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Ere this, several pamphlets had passed between Luther and Zwingle on the question of the Lord’s Supper. Those from the pen of Luther were so violent that they left an impression of weakness. The perfect calmness of Zwingle’s replies, on the other hand, produced a conviction of strength. Zwingle’s calmness stung Luther to the quick. It humiliated him. Popes and emperors had lowered their pretensions in his presence; the men of war whom the Papacy had sent forth from the Vatican to do battle with him, had returned discomfited. He could not brook the thought of lowering his sword before the pastor of Zurich. Must he, the doctor of Christendom, sit at the feet of Zwingle?

A little more humility, a little less dogmatism, a stronger desire for truth than for victory, would have saved Luther from these explosions, which but tended to widen a breach already too great, and

provoke a controversy which planted many a thorn in the future path of the Reformation.

The Landgrave of Hesse undertook with characteristic ardour the reconciliation of the German and Swiss Protestants, who now began to be called respectively the Lutheran and the Reformed. Soon after his return from the Diet of Spires, he sent invitations to the heads of the two parties to repair to his Castle of Marburg,¹ and discuss their differences in his presence. Zwingle's heart leaped for joy when he received the invitation. To end the feud, close the gulf, and rally all the scattered forces of the Gospel into one phalanx, was to him a delightful thought, and a blessed presage of final victory.

The reception given at Wittenberg to the invitation was not so cordial. Luther hung back—declined, in short. He did not like that the landgrave should move in this matter; he suspected that there was under it the snake of a political alliance;² besides, although he did not confess it to his friends, nor perhaps to himself, he seemed to have a presentiment of defeat. This opinion of Zwingle's, he said, was plausible, and had attractions for minds that loved things that they could understand. This mystery, this miracle of Christ's bodily presence in the Lord's Supper, had been left, he thought, in the Gospel as the test of our submission, as an exercise for our faith. This absurdity, which wears the guise of piety, had been so often uttered by great doctors that Luther could not help repeating it.

But second thoughts convinced Luther and Melancthon that they could not decline the conference. Popish Christendom would say they were afraid, and Reformed Christendom would lay at their door the continuance of the breach which so many deplored, should they persist in their refusal. They had even suggested to the Elector of Saxony that he should interpose his veto upon their journey. The elector, however, disdained so discreditable a manoeuvre. They next proposed that a Papist should be chosen as umpire, assigning as the reason of this strange proposition that a Papist only would be an impartial judge, forgetting that the party of all others in Christendom pledged to the doctrine of the real presence was the Church of

¹Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 121.

²Luth. Cor., Aug. 2, 1529—Michelet, bk. 3, ch. 1, p. 217.

Rome. Every device faded; they must go to Marburg; they must meet Zwingle.

The pastor of Zurich, with a single attendant, stole away by night. The town council, having regard to the perils of the journey, which had to be gone in good part over the territories of the emperor, in the midst of foes, into whose hands should the Reformer fall, he would see Zurich no more, refused to give him leave to depart. Accordingly Zwingle took the matter into his own hand, willing to risk life rather than forego the opportunity of uniting the ranks of the Reformation. Leaving a letter behind him to explain his departure to the council, he set out, and reached Basle in five days. Embarking at this point on the Rhine, in company of Ecolampadius, he descended the river to Strasburg. Here the travelers lodged a night in the house of Matthew Zell, the cathedral preacher. On the morrow they again set out, and taking the most unfrequented paths, escorted by a troop of Hessian cavalry, they at length on the 29th September reached Marburg.

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The Wittenbergers had not yet arrived; they appeared at Marburg the next day. With Luther came Melancthon, Jonas, and Cruciger; Zwingle was accompanied by Ecolampadius from Basle, Bucer and Hedio from Strasburg, and Osiander from Nuremberg.³ The landgrave lodged them in his castle, an ancient fortress standing on the brow of a hill, and commanding a noble view of the valley of the Lahn. He made them sit together at table, and entertained them in right princely fashion. To look each other in the face might help, he thought, to melt the ice in the heart.

The affair was much spoken of. The issue was watched intently in the two camps of Rome and Protestantism. Will the breach be healed? asked the Romanists in alarm; the Protestants hoped that it would, and that from the conference chamber at Marburg; a united band would come forth. From many lands came theologians, scholars, and nobles to Marburg to witness the discussion, and if need were to take part in it.⁴ Thousands followed Luther and Zwingle with their prayers who could not come in person.

The first day, after dinner, Luther and Ecolampadius walked together in the castle yard. The converse of these two chiefs was fa-

³Ruchat, tom. 2, p. 143.

⁴Sleidan, bk. 6, P. 121. Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 18; Additio.

miliar and affectionate. In Ecolampadius, Luther had found another Melancthon. The Reformer of Basle united an erudition almost as profound as that of the great scholar of Wittemberg, with a disposition nearly as sweet and gentle. But when Bucer, who had once been intimate with Luther, and had now gone over to Zwingle's side, approached, the Reformer shook his fist in his face, and said half jocularly, half in earnest, "As for you, you are a good-for-nothing knave."⁵

It was thought that a private meeting between selected persons from the two sides would pave the way for the public conference. But let us beware, said the landgrave, of at once engaging Luther and Zwingle in combat; let us take the disputants two by two, mating the mildest with the hottest, and leave them alone to debate the matter between themselves. Ecolampadius was told off with Luther, Melancthon was paired with Zwingle. They were then shown into separate chambers, and left to discuss with each other till dinner-time.⁶ Although on some points, more especially those of the divinity of Christ, original sin, and the deference due to the first six Councils, the Swiss Reformers were able to clear themselves of some suspicions under which they lay in the eyes of the German Protestants, the progress made at these private meetings towards a reconciliation was not by any means so great as had been looked for. As the Swiss deputies rejoined each other on their way to the dinner-table, they briefly exchanged first impressions. Zwingle, whispering into the ear of Ecolampadius, said that Melancthon was a very Proteus, so great was his dexterity in evading the point of his opponent's argument; and Ecolampadius, putting his mouth to Zwingle's ear, complained that in Luther he had found a second Dr. Eck.

On the day following, the 2nd October, the conference was opened in public. The landgrave Philip, in a plain dress, and without any show of rank, took his place at the head of a table which had been set in one of the rooms of the castle. Seated with him were Luther, Zwingle, Melancthon, and Ecolampadius. Their friends sat on benches behind them; the rest of the hall was devoted to the

⁵Scultet, *Annal.*, ad 1529.

⁶Scultet, tom. 2, p. 198. Ruchat. tom. 2, p. 143.

accommodation of a few of the distinguished men who had flocked to Marburg from so many places to witness the discussion.

The proceedings opened with Luther's taking a piece of chalk, and proceeding to trace some characters upon the velvet cover of the table. When he had finished, it was found that he had written—"Hoc est in eum corpus." "Yes," said he, laying down the bit of chalk, and displaying the writing to those around the table, "these are the words of Christ-'This is my body.' From this rock no adversary shall dislodge me."

No one denied that these were the words of Christ, but the question was, what was their sense. The whole controversy, on which hung issues to Protestantism so momentous, turned on this. The fundamental principle of Protestantism was that the Word of God is the supreme authority, and that obscure and doubtful passages are to be interpreted by others more clear. If this principle were to be followed on the present occasion, there could be no great difficulty in determining the sense of the words of Christ,

"This is my body."

The argument of the Swiss was wholly in the line of the fundamental principle of Protestantism. Luther had but one arrow in his quiver. His contention was little else than a constant repetition of the words which he had written with chalk on the table-cover. [557]

Ecolampadius asked Luther whether he did not admit that there are figures of speech in the Bible, as "I am the door," "John is Elias," "God is a rock," "The rock was Christ." The words, "This is my body," he maintained, were a like figure of speech.

Luther admitted that there were figures in the Bible, but denied that this was one of them.

A figure we must hold them, responded Ecolampadius, otherwise Christ teaches contradictory propositions. In his sermon in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, he says, "The flesh profiteth nothing;" but in the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper, literally interpreted, he says the flesh profiteth everything. The doctrine of the Lord's Supper, according to that exegesis, overthrows the doctrine of the sermon. Christ has one dogma for the multitude at Capernaum, and another dogma for his disciples in the upper

chamber. This cannot be; therefore the words “This is my body” must be taken figuratively.⁷

Luther attempted to turn aside the force of this argument by making a distinction. There was, he said, a material eating of Christ’s flesh, and there was a spiritual eating of it. It was the former, the material eating, of which Christ declared that it profiteth nothing.⁸

A perilous line of argument for Luther truly! It was to affirm the spirituality of the act, while maintaining the materiality of the thing.

Ecolampadius hinted that this was in effect to surrender the argument. It admitted that we were to eat spiritually, and if so we did not eat bodily, the material manducation being in that case useless.

No, quickly retorted Luther, we are to eat bodily also. We are not to ask of what use. God has commanded it, and we are to do it. This was to come back to the point from which he had started; it was to reiterate, with a little periphrasis, the words “This is my body.”

It is worthy of notice that the argument since so often employed in confutation of the doctrine of Christ’s corporeal presence in the Lord’s Supper, namely, that a body cannot be in two places at one and the same time, was employed by our Lord himself at Capernaum. When he found that his hearers understood him to say that they must “eat his flesh and drink his blood,” after a corporeal manner, he at once restricted them to the spiritual sense, by telling them that his body was to ascend to heaven. “What” ([John 6:62, 63](#)) “and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

The hour to adjourn had now arrived, and the disputants retired with the prince to dinner. At table there came an hour’s familiar and friendly talk with their host and with one another. In the afternoon they again repaired to the public hall, where the debate was resumed by Zwingle. The Scriptures, science, the senses, all three repudiate the Lutheran and Popish doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. Zwingle took his stand first on the ground of Scripture. Applying the great Protestant rule that Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture, he pressed Luther with the argument which had been started by Eco-

⁷Scultet, 2, 217. Ruchat, 2, 145.

⁸Ibid.

lampadius, namely, the manifest contradiction between the teaching of our Lord in the sermon at Capernaum and his teaching in the Lord's Supper, if the words of institution are to be taken literally. "If so taken," said Zwingle, "Christ has given us, in the Lord's Supper, what is useless to us." He added the stinging remark, "The oracles of the demons were obscure, not so are those of Jesus Christ."⁹

"But," replied Luther, "it is not his own flesh, but ours, of which Christ affirms that it profiteth nothing." This, of course, was to maintain that Christ's flesh profited.

Zwingle might have urged that Christ was speaking of "the flesh of the Son of Man;" that his hearers so understood him, seeing they asked, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" and that to refute this view, Christ adduced the future fact of his ascension, and so limited them to the figurative or spiritual sense of his words. Waiving this argument, Zwingle simply asked how flesh could nourish the soul? With the spirit only can the soul be fed. "We eat the flesh of Christ bodily with the mouth," rejoined Luther, "and spiritually with the soul."

This appeared to Zwingle to be to maintain contradictions. It was another way of returning to the starting-point, "This is my body." It was in fact to maintain that the words were to be taken neither figuratively nor literally, and yet that they were to be taken in both senses.

To travel further on this line was evidently impossible. An absurdity had been reached. Zwingle now allowed himself greater scope and range. He dwelt especially upon the numerous wider passages in the Scriptures in which the sign is put for the thing signified, and maintained that we have Christ's authority in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel for saying that it is so here, that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are not the very body and blood, but only the representatives of that body and blood, through which there cometh eternal life to men. Not in vain did the Reformer of Zurich thus argue. Minds were opening around him. The simplicity of his views, and their harmony with the usual method by which the spirit acts upon the soul of man, recommended them to the listeners. The light of the Word let fall upon the Lord's Supper, its nature, its

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⁹D'Aubigne, bk 8, chap. 7.

design, and its mode of operation came clearly out. The anomalous mysteriousness that had shrouded it departed, and it took its place beside the other institutions of the Economy of Grace, as working like them spiritual effects by spiritual means. They felt that the consistency of even Luther's scheme of salvation by faith demanded it, and though Luther himself remained as unconvinced as ever, there were not a few conversions in the audience. There was a notable one—the ex-Franciscan, Francis Lambert, formerly of Avignon, now the head of the Hessian Church. His spare figure and eager eye made him a marked object in the throng of listeners; and when the discussion closed, his admiration of Luther, whose friendship and respect he enjoyed in return, did not prevent his declaring himself to be of the opinion of Zwingle. The Wittenberg doctors bewailed his defection. They saw in it not a proof of the soundness of Zwingle's argument, but an evidence of the Frenchman's fickleness. Have we not all left the Church of Rome? asked Lambert. Is that, too, the fruit of fickleness? This ended the first day's discussion.

The contest was continued on the following day, Sunday. Abandoning the theological ground, the doctor of Zurich attempted to carry his point by weapons borrowed from science. A body cannot be in more places than one at the same time, urged Zwingle. Christ's body is like ours; how can it be at once in heaven and on the earth, at the right hand of God and in the bread of the Eucharist? How can it be at the same instant on every one of the thousand altars at which the Eucharist is being celebrated? But Luther refused to answer at the bar of mathematics. He would hold up the tablecloth and point to the words "This is my body." He would permit neither Scripture nor science to interpret them in any sense but that in which he understood them. He would assert that it was a matter not to be understood, but to be believed. It might be against nature, it might be unknown to science; that did not concern him. God had said it, Christ's body was in heaven, and it was in the Sacrament; it was in the Sacrament substantially as born of the Virgin. There was the proof of it, "This is my body."

"If the body of Christ can be in several places at one and the same time," rejoined Zwingle, "then our bodies likewise, after the resurrection, must possess the power of occupying more places than

one at a time, for it is promised that our bodies shall be fashioned like unto the glorious body of our Lord.”

“That proves nothing,” Luther replied. “What the text affirms is, that our bodies in their outward fashion are to resemble Christ’s body, not that they are to be endowed with a like power.”

“My dear sirs,” Luther continued, “behold the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, ‘This is my body.’ That truth I cannot abandon. I must confess and believe that the body of Jesus Christ is there.”

“Ah, well, my dear doctor,” replied Zwingle, “you put the body of Jesus Christ locally in the Lord’s Supper, for you say, ‘It behooves the body of Jesus Christ to be there.’ There is an adverb of place.”

“I repeat simply the words of Jesus Christ,” said Luther. “But since you are captious, I must again say that I will have nothing to do with mathematical reasons. I throw away the adverb there, for Christ says, ‘This [not there] is my body.’ Whether that body is confined to a place, or whether it fills all space, I prefer to be ignorant rather than to know, since God has not been pleased to reveal it, and no man in the world is able to decide the point.”

“But Christ’s body is finite, and bounded by place,” urged Zwingle.

“No,” responded Luther, “away with these mathematical novelties; I take my stand on the almightiness of God.”

“The power is not the point to be established,” replied Zwingle, “but the fact that the body is in divers places at the same moment.”

“That,” said Luther, “I have proved by the words ‘This is my body.’”

Zwingle reproached him with always falling into the error of begging the question, and he adduced a passage from Fulgentius, a Father of the fifth century, to show that the Fathers held that the body of Christ could be in only one place at a time. “Hear his words,” said Zwingle. ‘The Son of God,’ says Fulgentius, ‘took the attributes of true humanity, and did not lose those of true divinity. Born in time according to his mother, he lives in eternity according to his divinity that he holds from the Father; coming from man he is man, and consequently in a place; proceeding from the Father he is God, and consequently present in every place. According to his human

nature, he was absent from heaven while he was upon the earth, and quitted the earth when he ascended into heaven; but according to his divine nature he remained in heaven when he came down from thence, and did not abandon the earth when he returned thither.”

Luther put aside the testimony of Fulgentius, saying that this Father was not speaking of the Lord’s Supper; and he again betook him to his battle-horse, “This is my body” - “it is there in the bread.”

“If it is there in the bread,” said Zwingle, “it is there as in a place.”

“It is there,” reiterated Luther, “but it is not there as in a place; it is at the right hand of God. He has said, ‘This is my body,’ that is enough for me.”

“But that is not to reason,” retorted Zwingle, “that is to wrangle. You might as well maintain because Christ, addressing his mother from the cross and pointing to St. John, said, ‘Woman, behold thy son,’ that therefore St. John was the son of Mary.” To all arguments and proofs to the contrary, an obstinate controversialist might oppose an endless iteration of the words, “Woman, behold thy son-Woman, behold thy son.” Zwingle further enforced his argument by quoting the words of Augustine to Dardanus. “Let us not think,”

[561] says he, “that Christ according to his human form is present in every place. Christ is everywhere present as God, and yet by reason of his true body he is present in a definite part of heaven. That cannot be called a body of which place cannot be predicated.”

Luther met the authority of Augustine as he had done that of Fulgentius, by denying that he was speaking of the Lord’s Supper, and he wound up by saying that “Christ’s body was present in the bread, but not as in a place.”

The dinner-hour again interposed. The ruffled theologians tried to forget at the table of their courteous and princely entertainer the earnest tilting in which they had been engaged, and the hard blows they had dealt to one another in the morning’s conference.

Ecolampadius had been turning over in his mind the words of Luther, that Christ’s body was present in the Sacrament, but not as in a place. It was possible, he thought, that in these words common ground might be found on which the two parties might come together. On reassembling in the hall they became the starting-point of the discussion. Reminding Luther of his admission, Ecolampadius asked

him to define more precisely his meaning. If Christ's body is present, but not as a body is present in a place, then let us inquire what is the nature of Christ's bodily presence.

879 "It is in vain you urge me," said Luther, who saw himself about to be dragged out of his circle, "I will not move a single step. Only Augustine and Fulgentius are with you; all the rest of the Fathers are with us."

"As, for instance-?" quietly inquired Ecolampadius.

"Oh, we will not name them," exclaimed Luther; "Christ's words suffice for us. When Augustine wrote on this subject he was a young man, and his statements are confused."

"If we cite the Fathers," replied Ecolampadius, "it is not to shelter our opinion under their authority, but solely to shield ourselves from the charge you have hurled against us that we are innovators."¹⁰

The day had worn away in the discussion. It was now evening. On the lawns and woods around the castle the shadows of an October twilight were fast falling. Dusk filled the hall. Shall they bring in lights? To what purpose? Both sides feel that it is wholly useless to prolong the debate.

Two days had worn away in this discussion. The two parties were no nearer each other than at the beginning. The Swiss theologians had exhausted every argument from Scripture and from reason. Luther was proof against them all. He stood immovably on the ground he had taken up at the beginning; he would admit no sense of the words but the literal one; he would snatch up the cover from the table and, displaying triumphantly before the eyes of Zwingle and Ecolampadius the words he had written upon it—"This is my body"-he would boast that there he still stood, and that his opponents had not driven him from this ground, nor ever should. Zwingle, who saw the hope so dearly cherished by him of healing the schism fast vanishing, burst into tears. He besought Luther to come to terms, to be reconciled, to accept them as brothers. Neither prayers nor tears could move the doctor of Wittenberg. He demanded of the Helvetian Reformers unconditional surrender. They must accept the Lord's Supper in the sense in which he took it; they must subscribe to the tenet of the real presence. This the Swiss Protestants declared

¹⁰Scultet. 2, 220-228. Ruchat, 2, 148-155.

they could not do. On their refusal, Luther declared that he could not regard them as having a standing within the Church, nor could he receive them as brothers. As a sword these words went to the heart of Zwingle. Again he burst into tears. Must the children of the Reformation be divided? must the breach go unhealed? It must.

On the 12th October, 1529, Luther writes, in reference to this famous conference: "All joined in suing me for peace with the most extraordinary humility. The conference lasted two days. I responded to the arguments of Ecolampadius and Zwinglius by citing this passage, 'This is my body;' and I refuted all their objections."

And again, "The whole of Zwinglius' argument may be shortly reduced to the following summary:-That the body of our Lord cannot exist without occupying space and without dimensions [and therefore it was not in the bread]. Ecolampadius maintained that the Fathers styled the bread a symbol, and consequently that it was not the real body of Christ. They supplicated us to bestow upon them the title of 'brothers.' Zwinglius even implored the landgrave with tears to grant this. 'There is no place on earth,' said he, 'where I so much covet to pass my days as at Wittemberg.' We did not, however, accord to them this appellation of brothers. All we granted was that which charity enjoins us to bestow even upon our enemies. They, however, behaved in all respects with an incredible degree of humility and amiability."¹¹

[562] Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, was unspeakably mortified by the issue of the conference. He had been at great pains to bring it about; he had built the highest hopes upon it; now all these hopes had to be relinquished. Wherever he looked, outside the Protestant camp, he beheld union. All, from the Pope downwards, were gathering in one vast confederacy to crush both Wittemberg and Zurich, and yet Luther and Zwingle were still standing-the former haughtily and obstinately-apart! Every hour the storm lowers more darkly over Protestantism, yet its disciples do not unite! His disappointment was great.

All the time this theological battle was going on, a terrible visitant was approaching Marburg. The plague, in the form of the sweating sickness, had broken out in Germany, and was traversing

¹¹Luth. Cor.-Michelet, pp. 217, 218; Lond., 1846.

that country, leaving on its track the dead in thousands. It had now reached the city where the conference was being held, and was committing in Marburg the same fearful ravages which had marked its presence in other towns. This was an additional reason for breaking up the conference. Philip had welcomed the doctors with joy; he was about to see them depart in sorrow. A terrible tempest was brewing on the south of the Alps, where Charles and Clement were nightly closeted in consultation over the extermination of Protestantism. The red flag of the Moslem was again displayed on the Danube, soon, it might be, to wave its bloody folds on the banks of the Elbe. In Germany thousands of swords were ready to leap from their scabbards to assail the Gospel in the persons of its adherents. All round the horizon the storm seemed to be thickening; but the saddest portent of all, to the eye of Philip, was the division that parted into two camps the great Reformed brotherhood, and marshalled in two battles the great Protestant army.

Chapter 17: The Marburg Confession

Further Effects of the Landgrave-Zwingle's Approaches-Luther's Repulse-The Landgrave's Proposal-Articles Drafted by Luther- Signed by Both Parties-Agreement in Doctrine-Only One Point of Difference, namely, the Manner of Christ's Presence in the Sacrament- The Marburg Confession-A Monument of the Real Brotherhood of all Protestants-Bond between Germany and Helvetia-Ends served by it

Yet before seeing the doctors depart, never perhaps to meet each other again, the landgrave asked himself, can nothing more be done to heal the breach? Must this one difference irreconcilably divide the disciples of the Gospel? Agreement on the Eucharist is, it seems, impossible; but is there not besides enough of common ground to permit of a union, of such sort as may lead to united counsels and united action, in the presence of those tremendous dangers which lower equally over Germany and over Switzerland?

“Are we not brethren, whether Luther acknowledge it or not?” was the question which Philip put to himself. “Does not Rome account both of us her enemies?” This is negative proof of brotherhood. Clearly Rome holds us to be brothers. Do not both look for salvation through the same sacrifice of the cross? and do not both bow to the Bible as the supreme authority of what they are to believe? Are not these strong bonds? Those between whom they exist can hardly be said to be twain.

Philip accordingly made another effort. He made the doctors go with him, one by one, into his cabinet. He reasoned, entreated, exhorted; pointed now to the storm that seemed ready to burst, and now to the advantages that union might secure. More from the desire to gratify the landgrave than from any lively hope of achieving union, the two parties agreed again to meet and to confer.

The interview was a most touching one. The circumstances amid which it took place were well fitted to humble pride, and

to melt the hearts of men. Hundreds were dying of the plague around them. Charles and the Pope, Ferdinand and the princes, all were whetting their swords, eager to spin the blood alike of Zwinglian and of Lutheran. Only let the emperor be master of the position, and he will not spare Luther because he believes in the real presence, nor Zwingle because he differs on this point from Wittenberg. Both, in the judgment of Charles, are heretics, equally deserving of extermination. What did this mean? If they were hated of all men, surely it was for his name's sake; and was not this a proof that they were his children?

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Taught by his instincts of Christian love, Zwingle opened the conference by enunciating a truth which the age was not able to receive. "Let us," said he, "proclaim our union in all things in which we agree; and as for the rest, let us forbear as brothers,"¹ adding that never would peace be attained in the Church unless her members were allowed to differ on secondary points.

The Landgrave Philip, catching at this new idea, and deeming that now at last union had been reached, exclaimed, "Yes, let us unite; let us proclaim our union."

"With none on earth do I more desire to be united than with you," said Zwingle, addressing Luther and his companions. Ecolampadius, Bucer, and Hedio made the same declaration.

This magnanimous avowal was not without its effect. It had evidently touched the hearts of the opposing rank of doctors. Luther's prejudice and obduracy were, it appeared, on the point of being vanquished, and his coldness melted. Zwingle's keen eye discovered this: he burst into tears- tears of joy-seeing himself, as he believed, on the eve of an event that would gladden the hearts of thousands in all the countries of the Reformation, and would strike Rome with terror. He approached: he held out his hand to Luther: he begged him only to pronounce the word "brother." Alas! what a cruel disappointment awaited him. Luther coldly and cuttingly replied, "Your spirit is different from ours." It was indeed different: Zwingle's was catholic, Luther's sectarian.

The Wittenberg theologians consulted together. They all concurred in Luther's resolution. "We," said they to Zwingle and his

¹Scult., p. 207.

friends, “hold the belief of Christ’s bodily presence in the Lord’s Supper to be essential to salvation, and we cannot in conscience regard you as in the communion of the Church.”²

“In that case,” replied Bucer, “it were folly to ask you to recognize us as brethren. But we, though we regard your doctrine as dis-honouring to Christ, now on the right hand of the Father, yet, seeing in all things you depend on him, we acknowledge you as belonging to Christ. We appeal to posterity.”³ This was magnanimous.

The Zwinglians had won a great victory. They had failed to heal the schism, or to induce the Wittenbergers to acknowledge them as brethren; nevertheless, they had reared a noble monument to the catholicity of Christian love.

Their meekness was mightier than Luther’s haughtiness. Not only was its power felt in the conference chamber, where it made some converts, but throughout Germany. From this time forward the more spiritual doctrine of the Eucharist began to spread throughout the Lutheran Church. Even Luther bowed his head. The tide in his breast began to turn-to rise. Addressing the Zwinglians, and speaking his last word, he said, “We acknowledge you as friends; we do not consider you as brothers. I offer you the hand of peace and charity.”⁴

Overjoyed that something had been won, the Landgrave Philip proposed that the two parties should unite in making a joint profession of their faith, in order that the world might see that on one point only did they differ, namely, the manner in which Christ is present in the Lord’s Supper, and that after all the great characteristic of the Protestant Churches was UNITY, though manifested in diversity. The suggestion recommended itself to both sides. Luther was appointed to draw up the articles of the Protestant faith. “I will draft them,” said he, as he retired to his chamber to begin his task, “with a strict regard to accuracy, but I don’t expect the Zwinglians to sign them.”

The pen of Luther depicts the Protestant doctrine as evolved by the Reformation at Wittenberg; the rejection or acceptance of Zwingle will depict it as developed at Zurich. The question of

²Zwing. Opp., 4, 203.

³Ibid., p. 194.

⁴Zwing, Opp., 4, 203.

brotherhood is thus about to be appealed from the bar of Luther to the bar of fact. It is to be seen whether it is a different Gospel or the same Gospel that is received in Germany and in Switzerland.

The articles, fourteen in number, gave the Wittemberg view of the Christian system—the Trinity, the person and offices of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, original sin, justification by faith, the authority of the Scriptures, rejection of tradition, baptism, holiness, civil order; in short, all the fundamental doctrines of revealed truth were included in the program of Luther.⁵

The doctor of Wittemberg read his paper article by article. “We cordially say amen,” exclaimed the Zwinglians, “and are ready to subscribe every one of them.” Luther stood amazed. Were the men of Helvetia after all of one mind with the men of Wittemberg? Were Switzerland and Germany so near to each other? Why should man put asunder those whom the Holy Spirit had joined?

Still the gulf was not closed, or rather sectarianism again opened it. Luther had reserved the article on the Lord’s Supper to the last.

“We all believe,” Luther continued, “that the Sacrament of the altar is the Sacrament of the very body and very blood of Jesus Christ; and that the spiritual manducation of this body and blood is specially necessary to every true Christian.”⁶

This brought the two parties once more in presence of the great impassable obstacle. It marked the furthest limit on the road to union the Church in that age had reached. Here she must halt. Both parties felt that advance beyond was impossible, till God should further enlighten them. But they resolved to walk together so far as they were agreed. And here, standing at the parting of the ways as it were, they entered into covenant with one another, to avoid all bitterness in maintaining what each deemed the truth, and to cherish towards one another the spirit of Christian charity.⁷

On the 4th October, 1529, the signatures of both parties were appended to this joint confession of Protestant faith. This was better than any mere protestation of brotherhood. It was actual brotherhood, demonstrated and sealed. The articles, we venture to affirm,

⁵Pallavicino, lib. 3, cap. 1. Seckendorf, lib. 3, sec. 17, p. 158. Ruchat, tom. 2, pp. 156-159.

⁶Scultet, p. 282.

⁷Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 121.

are a complete scheme of saving truth, and they stand a glorious monument that Helvetia and Germany were one—in other words, a glorious monument to the Oneness of Protestantism.

This Confession of Marburg was the first well-defined boundary-line drawn around the Protestants. It marked them off as a distinct body from the enthusiasts on the one hand and the Romanists on the other. Their flag was seen to float on the middle ground between the camp of the visionaries and that of the materialists. “There is,” said Zwingle, in opposition to the former, who saw in the Sacrament only a commemoration, “there is a real presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper.” “Faith,” said Luther, in opposition to the *opus operatum* of the latter, “faith is necessary in order to our benefiting by the Sacrament.” We thus see that the middle camp has two opposing fronts, corresponding to the set of foes on either hand, but substantial oneness in itself. It is gathered round one King-Christ: round one expiation—the cross: round one law—the Bible.

But if the Church of the Reformation still remained outwardly divided, her members were thereby guarded against the danger of running into political alliances, and supporting their cause by force of arms. This line of policy the Landgrave Philip had much at heart, and it formed one of the objects he had in view in his attempts to conduct to a successful issue the conferences at Marburg. Union might have rendered the Protestants too strong. They might have leaned on the arm of flesh, and forgotten their true defense. The Reformation was a spiritual principle. From the sword it could derive no real help. Its conquests would end the moment those of force began. From that hour it would begin to decay, it would be powerless to conquer, and would cease to advance. But let its spiritual arm be disentangled from political armor, which could but weigh it down, let its disciples hold forth the truth, let them fight with prayers and sufferings, let them leave political alliances and the fate of battles to the ordering and overruling of their Divine Head—let them do this, and all opposition would melt in their path, and final victory would attest at once the truth of their cause, and the omnipotence of their King.

Chapter 18: The Emperor, the Turk, and the Reformation

Charles's great Ambition, the Supremacy of Christendom-Protestantism his great Stumbling-Block-The Edict of Worms is to Remove that Stumbling-Block-Charles Disappointed-The Victory of Pavia Renews the Hope-Again Disappointed-The Diet of Spire, 1526-Again Balked-In the Church, Peace: in the World, War-The Turk before Vienna-Terror in Germany-The Emperor again Laying the Train for Extinction of Protestantism -Charles Lands at Genoa-Protestant Deputies-Interview with Emperor at Piacenza-Charles's stern Reply- Arrest of Deputies-Emperor sets out for Bologna

Picture: Courtyard of a Bolognese House

Picture: Cardinal Campeggio

Picture: The Three Protestant Ambassadors before the Emperor Charles

We have traced the steps by which Charles V. climbed to the summit of power. It was his ambition to wield the supremacy of Europe without being under the necessity of consulting any will but his own, or experiencing impediment or restraint in any quarter whatever. The great stumbling-block in his path to this absolute and unfettered exercise of his arbitrary will, was the Protestant movement. It divided with him the government of Christendom, and by its empire of the conscience it set limits to his empire of the sword. In his onward march he thought that it was necessary to sweep Luther and Wittemberg from his path. But ever as he put his hand upon his sword's hilt to carry his purpose into effect, some hindrance or other prevented his drawing it, and made him postpone the execution of his great design. From Aix-la-Chapelle, where the much-coveted imperial diadem was placed on his brow, he went straight to Worms, where in assembled Diet he passed the edict consigning Luther to proscription and the stake. Now, he thought,

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had come the happy moment he had waited for. Rid of the monk and freed from the annoyance of his heresy, he is now supreme arbiter in Christendom. At that instant a war broke out between him and France. For four years, from 1521 to 1525, the emperor had to leave Luther in peace, translating the Scriptures, and propagating the Reformed doctrines throughout Germany, while he was waging an arduous and dubious contest with Francis I. But the victory of Pavia placed France and Italy at his feet, and left free his sword to do his will, and what does he will but to execute the Edict of Worms? Now he will strike the blow. The emperor's hand is again upon his poniard: Luther is a dead man: the knell of Wittemberg has rung out.

[566] Not yet. Strange to say, at that moment opposition arose in a quarter where Charles was entitled to look for only zealous co-operation. The Pope, Clement VII., was seized with a sudden dread of the Spanish power. The Italians at the same moment became inflamed with the project of driving out the Spaniards, and raising their country from the vassalage of centuries to the independence and glory of early days. Francis I. was burning with a desire to avenge the humiliation of his captivity, and these concurring causes led to a formidable league of sovereigns against the man who but a few months before had seen all opposition give way before him. The emperor unsheathed his sword, but not to strike where he so fondly hoped to inflict a deadly blow. The puissant Charles must still leave the monk of Wittemberg at peace, and while his doctrines are day by day striking a deeper root, the emperor is compelled to buckle on his armor, and meet the combination which Clement VII., Francis I., and Henry VIII. have entered into against him.

Then come three years (1526-1529) of distracting thought and harassing toil to the emperor. But if compelled to be absent in camps and on tented fields, may he not find others who will execute the edict, and sweep the obnoxious monk from his path? He will try. He convokes (1526) a Diet to meet at Spires, avowedly for the purpose of having the edict executed. It is their edict not less than his, for they had concurred with him in fulminating it; surely the princes will sleep no longer over this affair; they will now send home the bolt! Not yet. The Diet of Spires did exactly the opposite of what Charles meant it should do. The majority of the princes were friendly

to Luther, though in 1521 they had been hostile to him; and they enacted that in the matter of religion every State should be at liberty to do as it judged best. The Diet that was to unchain the furies of Persecution, proclaims Toleration.

The war-clouds at this time hang heavy over Christendom, and discharge their lightnings first on one country, then on another; but there is a space of clear sky above Wittemberg, and in the interval of quiet which Saxony enjoys, we see commissioners going forth to set in order the Churches of the German Reformation. All the while this peaceful work of upbuilding is going on, the reverberations of the distant thunder-storm are heard rolling in the firmament. Now it is from the region of the Danube that the hoarse roar of battle is heard to proceed. There the Turk is closing in fierce conflict with the Christian, and the leisure of Ferdinand of Austria, which otherwise might be worse employed, is fully occupied in driving back the hordes of a Tartar invasion. Now it is from beyond the Alps that the terrible echoes of war are heard to roll. On the plains of Italy the legions of the emperor are contending against the arms of his confederate foes, and that land pays the penalty of its beauty and renown by having its soil moistened with the blood and darkened with the smoke of battle. And now comes another terrible peal, louder and more stunning than any that had preceded it, the last of that thunder-storm. It is upon the City of the Seven Hills that this bolt is discharged. How has it happened that the thunders have rolled thither? It was no arrangement of the emperor's that Rome should be smitten; the bolt he hoped would fall elsewhere. But the winds of the political, like those of the natural firmament, do not wait on the bidding of man. These winds, contrary to the expectation of all men, wafted that terrible war-cloud to where rose in proud magnificence the temples and palaces of the Eternal City, and where stood the throne of her Pontiff. The riches and glory of ages were blighted in an hour.

With this terrific peal the air clears, and peace again returns for a little while to Christendom. The league against the emperor was now at an end; he had cut it in pieces with his sword. Italy was again at his feet; and the Pope, who in an evil hour for himself had so strangely revolted, was once more his ally. There is no king who may now stand up against Charles. It seemed as if, at last, the hour

had fully come for which the emperor had waited so long. Now he can strike with the whole force of the Empire. Now he will measure his strength with that mysterious movement, which he beholds, with a hatred not unmingled with dread, rising higher and extending wider every year, and which, having neither exchequer nor army, is yet rearing an empire in the world that threatens to eclipse his own.

Again darkness gathered round, and danger threatened the Protestant Church. Two terrible storms hung lowering in the skies of the world. The one darkened the East, the other was seen rising in the West. It was the Eastern tempest that would be first to burst, men thought, and the inhabitants of Germany turned their eyes in that direction, and watched with alarm and trembling the progress of the cloud that was coming towards them. The gates of Asia had opened, and had poured out the fierce Tartar hordes on a new attempt to submerge the rising Christianity and liberty of the West under a flood of Eastern barbarism. Traversing Hungary, the Ottoman host had sat down before the walls of Vienna a week before the Marburg Conference. The hills around that capital were white with their tents, and the fertile plains beneath its walls, which the hoof of Mussulman horse had never pressed till now, were trodden by their cavalry. The besiegers were opening trenches, were digging mines, were thundering with their cannon, and already a breach had been made in the walls. A few days and Vienna must succumb to the numbers, the impetuosity, and valor of the Ottoman warriors, and a desolate and blood-besprinkled heap would alone remain to mark where it had stood. The door of Germany burst open, the conquerors would pour along the valley of the Danube, and plant the crescent amid the sacked cities and devastated provinces of the Empire. The prospect was a terrible one. A common ruin, like avalanche on brow of Alp, hung suspended above all parties and ranks in Germany, and might at any moment sweep down upon them with resistless fury. "It is you," said the adherents of the old creed addressing the Lutherans, "who have brought this scourge upon us. It is you who have unloosed these angels of evil; they come to chastise you for your heresy. You have cast off the yoke of the Pope, and now you must bear the yoke of the Turk." "Not so," said Luther, "it is God who has unloosed this army, whose king is Abaddon the destroyer. They have been sent to punish us for our sins, our ingratitude for

the Gospel, our blasphemies, and above all, our shedding of the blood of the righteous.” Nevertheless, it was his opinion that all Germans ought to unite against the sultan for the common defense. It was no question of leagues or offensive war, but of country and of common safety: the Turk was at their hearths, and as neighbor assists neighbor whose house is on fire, so Protestant ought to aid Papist in repelling a foe that was threatening both with a common slaughter.

It was at this time that he preached his “Battle Sermon.” Its sound was like the voice of a great trumpet. Did ever general address words more energetic to his soldiers when about to engage in battle? “Mahomet,” said he, “exalts Christ as being without sin, but he denies that He is the true God; he is therefore His enemy. Alas! to this hour the world is such that it seems everywhere to rain disciples of Mahomet. Two men ought to oppose the Turks—the first is Christian, that is to say, prayer; the second is Charles, that is to say, the sword.... I know my dear Germans well-fat and well-fed swine as they are; no sooner is the danger removed than they think only of eating and sleeping. Wretched man, if thou dost not take up arms, the Turk will come; he will carry thee away into his Turkey; he will sell thee like a dog; and thou shalt serve him night and day, under the rod and the cudgel, for a glass of water and a morsel of bread. Think on this, be converted, and implore the Lord not to give thee the Turk for thy schoolmaster.”¹

Western freedom had never perhaps been in such extreme peril since the time when Xerxes led his myriad army to invade Greece. But the terrible calamity of Ottoman subjugation was not to befall Europe. The Turk had reached the furthest limits of his progress westward. From this point his slaughtering hordes were to be rolled back. While the cities and provinces of Germany waited in terror the tramp of his war-horses and the gleam of his scimitars, there came the welcome tidings that the Asiatic warriors had sustained a severe repulse before Vienna (16th October, 1529), and were now in full retreat to the Bosphorus.² The scarcity of provisions to which the Turkish camp was exposed, and the early approach of

¹“Heer predigt wider die Turken.”-L. Opp. (W) 20, 2691.

²Sleidan, bk. 6, p. 121.

winter, with its snow-storms, combined to effect the raising of the siege and the retreat of the invaders; but Luther recognised in this unexpected deliverance the hand of God, and the answer of prayer. “We Germans are always snoring,” he exclaimed, indignant at some whose gratitude was not so lively as he thought it ought to have been, “and there are many traitors among us. Pray,” he wrote to Myconius, “against the Turk and the gates of hell, that as the angel could not destroy one little city for the sake of one just soul in it, so we may be spared for the sake of the few righteous that are in Germany.”

But if the Eastern cloud had rolled away, and was fast vanishing in the distance, the one in the West had grown bigger than ever, and was coming rapidly onwards. “We have two Caesars,” said Luther, “one in the East and one in the West, and both our foes.” The emperor is again victorious over the league which his enemies had formed against him. He has defeated the King of France; he has taught Henry of England to be careful of falling a second time into the error he committed in the affair of Cognac; he has chastised the Pope, and compelled Clement VII. to sue for peace with a great ransom and the offer of alliance; and now he looks around him and sees no opponent save one, and that one apparently the weakest of all. That opponent swept from his path, he will mount to the pinnacle of power. Surely he who has triumphed over so many kings will not have to lower his sword before a monk. The emperor has left Spain in great wrath, and is on his way to chastise those audacious Protestants, who are now, as he believes, fully in his power. The terror of the Turk was forgotten in the more special and imminent danger that threatened the lives and religion of the Protestants. “The Emperor Charles,” said Luther, “has determined to show himself more cruel against us than the Turk himself, and he has already uttered the most horrible threats. Behold the hour of Christ’s agony and weakness. Let us pray for all those who will soon have to endure captivity and death.”

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Meanwhile the work at Wittemberg, despite the gathering clouds and the mutterings of the distant thunder, does not for one moment stand still. Let us visit this quiet retreat of learned men and scholars. In point of size this Saxon town is much inferior to many of the cities

³Luth. Opp., 3, 324.

of Germany. Neither among its buildings is there palatial edifice, nor in its landscape is there remarkable object to attract the eye, and awaken the admiration of the visitor, yet what a power is it putting forth! Here those mighty forces are at work which are creating the new age. Here is the fountain-head of those ideas which are agitating and governing all classes, from the man who is master of half the kingdoms of the world, to the soldier who fights in the ranks and the serf who tills the soil. In the autumn of 1529, Mathesius, the biographer of Luther, became a student in "the renowned university." The next Sabbath after his admission, at vespers, he heard "the great man Dr.

Luther preach" from the words of St. Peter ([Acts 2:38](#)), enjoining repentance and baptism. What a sermon from the lips of "the man of God" - "for which all the days of his pilgrimage on earth, and throughout eternity, he should have to give God thanks." At that period Melancthon lectured on Cicero's *De Oratoribus*, and his oration *Pro Archia*; and before noon on the Epistle to the Romans, and every Wednesday on Aristotle's *Ethics*. Bugenhagen lectured on the Epistles to the Corinthians; Jonas on the Psalms; Aurogallus on Hebrew Grammar; Weimar on Greek; Tulich on Cicero's *Offices*; Bach on Virgil; Volmar on the theory of the planets; Mulich on astronomy; and Cruciger on Terence, for the younger students. There were besides private schools for the youth of the town and its neighborhood, which were in vigorous operation. ⁴

Over and above his lectures in the university, and his sermons in the cathedral, the Reformer toiled with his pen to spread the Protestant light over Germany and countries more remote. A boon beyond all price was his German Bible: in style so idiomatic and elegant, and in rendering so faithful, that the Prince of Anhalt said it was as if the original penmen had lived in Germany, and used the tongue of the Fatherland. Luther was constantly adding to the obligations his countrymen owed him for this priceless treasure, by issuing new editions carefully revised. He wrote, moreover, expositions on several of the Epistles; commentaries on the prophets; he was at this moment busy on Daniel; he had prefixed an explanatory preface to the Apocalypse; and his commentary on Jeremiah was soon to

⁴Worsley, *Life of Luther*, vol. 2, p. 193.

follow. Nor must we omit the humblest, but not the least useful, of all the works which issued from his study, his *Smaller and Larger Catechisms*.

When we pause to contemplate these two men—Luther and Charles—can we have the slightest doubt in saying which is immeasurably the greater? The one sitting in his closet sends forth his word, which runs speedily throughout the earth, shaking into ruin ancient systems of superstition to which the ages have done reverence, rending the shackles from conscience, and saying to the slave, “Be thou free,” giving sight to the blind, raising up the fallen, and casting down the mighty; leading hearts captive, and plucking up or planting kingdoms. It is a God-like power which he exercises.

When we turn to the emperor in his gorgeous palace, editing his edicts, and dispatching them by liveried couriers to distant nations, we feel that we have made an immense stride downward. We have descended to a lower region, where we find a totally different and far inferior set of forces at work. Before Charles can effect anything he must get together an army, he must collect millions of treasure, he must blow his trumpets and beat his kettle-drums; and yet how little that is really substantial does he reap from all this noise and expense and blood! Another province or city, it may be, calls him master, but waits the first opportunity to throw off his yoke. His sword has effaced some of the old landmarks on the earth’s surface, and has traced a few new ones; but what truth has he established which may mold the destinies of men, and be a fountain of blessing in ages to come? What fruit does Spain or the world reap today from all the battles of Charles? It is now that we see which of the two men wielded real power, and which of the two was the true monarch.

The emperor was on his way to Germany, where he was expected next spring. He had made peace with Francis, he had renewed his alliance with the Pope, the Turk had gone back to his own land. It was one of those moments in the life of Charles when Fortune shed her golden beams upon his path, and beckoned him onwards with the flattering hope that now he was on the eve of attaining the summit of his ambition. One step more, one little remaining obstruction swept away, and then he would stand on the pinnacle of power. He did not conceal his opinion that that little obstruction was Wittemberg, and that the object of his journey was to make an end of it.

But in consummating his grand design he must observe the constitutional forms to which he had sworn at his coronation as emperor. The cradle of the Reformation was placed precisely in that part of his dominions where he was not absolute master. Had it been placed in Spain, in Flanders- anywhere, in short, except Saxony-how easy would it have been to execute the Edict of Worms! But in Germany he had to consult the will of others, and so he proceeded to convoke another Diet at Augsburg. Charles must next make sure of the Pope. He could not have the crafty Clement tripping him up the moment he turned his back and crossed the Alps on his way to Germany. He must go to Italy and have a personal interview with the Pontiff.

Setting sail from Spain, and coasting along on the waters of the Mediterranean, the imperial fleet cast anchor in the Bay of Genoa. The youthful emperor gazed, doubtless, with admiration and delight on the city of the Dorias, whose superb palaces, spread out in concentric rows on the face of the mountains, embosomed in orange and oleander groves, rise from the blue sea to the summit of the craggy and embattled Apennines. The Italians, on the other hand, trembled at the approach of their new master, whose picture, as drawn by their imaginations, resembled those Gothic conquerors who in former times had sacked the cities and trampled into the dust the fertility of Italy. Their fears were dispelled, however, when on stepping ashore they beheld in Charles not all irate and ferocious conqueror, come to chastise them for their revolt, but a pale-faced prince, of winning address and gentle manners, followed by a train of nobles in the gay costume of Spain, and, like their master, courteous and condescending.⁵ This amiable young man, who arrived among the Italians in smiles, could frown sternly enough on occasion, as the Protestant deputies, who were at this moment on their way to meet him, were destined to experience.

The Reformed princes, who gave in the famous protest to the Diet of Spires (1529), followed up their act by an appeal to the emperor. The ArchDuke Ferdinand, the president of the Diet, stormed and left the assembly, but the protesters appealed to a General Council and to posterity. Their ambassadors were now on their way to lay

⁵Robertson, *Hist. Charles V.*, bk. 5, p. 171; Edin., 1829.

the great Protest before Charles. Three burgesses, marked rather by their weight of character than by their eminence of position, had been selected for this mission. Their names were—John Ehinger, Burgomaster of Memmingen; Michael Caden, Syndic of Nuremberg; and Alexis Frauentrat, secretary to the Margrave of Brandenburg. Their mission was deemed a somewhat dangerous one, and before their departure a pension was secured to their widows in case of misfortune.⁶ They met the emperor at Piacenza, for so far had he got on his way to meet the Pope at Bologna, to which city Clement had retired, to benefit, it may be, after his imprisonment, by its healthy breezes, and to forget the devastation inflicted by the Spaniards on Rome, of which the daily sight of its plundered museums and burned palaces reminded him while he resided in the capital. Informed of the arrival of the Protestant deputies, and of the object of their journey, Charles appointed the 12th of September⁷ for an audience. The prospect of appearing in the imperial presence was no pleasant one, for they knew that they had come to plead for a cause which Charles had destined to destruction. Their fears were confirmed by receiving an ominous hint to be brief, and not preach a Protestant sermon to the emperor.

Unabashed by the imperial majesty and the brilliant court that waited upon Charles, these three plain ambassadors, when the day of audience came, discharged their mission with fidelity. They gave a precise narrative of all that had taken place in Germany on the matter of religion since the emperor quitted that country, which was in 1521. They specially instanced the edict of toleration promulgated by the Diet of 1526; the virtual repeal of that edict by the Diet of 1529; the Protest of the Reformed princes against that repeal; their challenge of religious freedom for themselves and all who should adhere to them, and their resolution, at whatever cost, never to withdraw from that demand, but to prosecute their Protest to the utmost of their power. In all matters of the Empire they would most willingly obey the emperor, but in the things of God they would obey no power on earth.⁸ So they spoke. It was no pleasant thing, verily, for the victor of kings and the ruler of two hemispheres to be thus plainly

⁶Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 123.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 16; Additio, 134.

taught that there were men in the world whose wills even he, with all his power, could not bend. This thought was the worm at the root of the emperor's glory. Charles deigned no reply; he dismissed the ambassadors with the intimation that the imperial will would be made known to them in writing. ⁹

On the 13th October the emperor's answer was sent to the deputies through his secretary, Alexander Schweiss. It was, in brief, that the emperor was well acquainted, through his brother Ferdinand and his colleagues, with all that had taken place in Germany; that he was resolved to maintain the edict of the last Diet of Spires-that, namely, which abolished the toleration inaugurated in 1526, and which laid the train for the extinction of the religious movement-and that he had written to the Duke of Saxony and his associates commanding him to obey the decree of the Diet, upon the allegiance which he owed to him and to the Empire; and that should he disobey, he would be necessitated for the maintenance of his authority, and for example's sake, to punish him. ¹⁰

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Guessing too truly what the emperor's answer would be, the ambassadors had prepared an appeal from it beforehand. This document they now presented to the secretary Schweiss in presence of witnesses. They had some difficulty in persuading the official to carry it to his master, but at length he consented to do so. We can imagine how the emperor's brow darkened as he read it. He ordered Schweiss to go and arrest the ambassadors. Till the imperial pleasure should be further made known to them, they were not to stir out of doors, nor write to their friends in Germany, nor permit any of their servants to go abroad, under pain of forfeiture of goods and life. ¹¹

It chanced that one of the deputies, Caden, was not in the hotel when the emperor's orders, confining the deputies to their lodgings, arrived. His servant slipped out and told him what had happened in his absence. The deputy, sitting down, wrote an account of the affair-their interview with the emperor, and his declared resolution to execute the Edict of Worms- to the Senate at Nuremberg, and dispatching it by a trusty messenger, whom he charged to proceed

⁹Sleidan. bk. 7, p. 124. D'Aubigne, bk. 14, chap. 1.

¹⁰Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 124. Seckendorf, lib. 2, p. 133.

¹¹Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 125. Seckendorf, lib. 2, p. 133.

with all haste on his way, he walked straight to the inn to share the arrest of his colleagues.

[571] Unless the compulsion of conscience comes in, mankind in the
[572] mass will be found too selfish and too apathetic to purchase, at the expense of their own toil and blood, the heritage of freedom for their children. Liberty says we may, religion says we must, die rather than submit. It is a noble sentiment of the poet, and finely expressed, that Freedom's battle, "bequeathed from bleeding sire to son," though often lost, is always won in the end, but therewith does not accord the fact. The history of Greece, of Rome, and of other nations, shows us, on a large view of matters, liberty dissociated from religion fighting a losing and not a winning battle. The more prominent instance, though not the only one, in modern times, is France. There we behold a brave nation fighting for "liberty" in contradistinction to, or rather as dissociated from "religion," and, after a conflict of well-nigh a century, liberty is not yet rooted in France.¹² The little Holland is an instance on the other side. It fought a great battle for religion, and in winning it won everything else besides. The only notable examples with which history presents us, of great masses triumphant over established tyrannies, are those of the primitive Christians, and the Reformers of the sixteenth century. Charles V. would have walked at will over Christendom, treading all rights and aspirations into the dust, had any weaker principle than conscience, evoked by Protestantism, confronted him at this epoch. The first to scale the fortress of despotism are ever the champions of religion; the champions of civil liberty, coming after, enter at the breach which the others had opened with their lives.

¹²The progress towards constitutional government which some Continental nations, and France in particular, have made since 1870, may be supposed to traverse the above argument, which may therefore be thought to require further explanation. The experience of a couple of decades is too limited to settle so large a question either way. Another decade may sweep away what had been won during its predecessors. One thing is certain, namely, that the permanent liberty of States must rest on a moral basis, and a moral basis true religion alone can create. France does well to dissociate her battle from Popery, the genius of which is so hostile to freedom, but her prospects of victory will be brighter according to the degree in which she allies herself with the religion of the Bible. The Continental nations are by no means at the end of their struggle. It is a great step to success to cast out the Papacy, but unless they fill its place by a Scriptural faith, Nihilism, or some other form of atheism, will rush in, and order and liberty will eventually perish.

Setting out from Piacenza on the 23rd October, the emperor went on to meet the Pope at Bologna. He carried with him the three Protestant deputies as his captives. Travelling by slow stages he gave ample time to the Italians to mark the splendor of his retinue, and the number and equipments of his army. The city he was now approaching had already enjoyed two centuries of eminence. Bologna was the seat of the earliest of those universities which arose in Europe when the light of learning began again to visit its sky. The first foundation of this school was in A.D. 425, by Theodosius the younger; it rose to eminence under Charlemagne, and attained its full splendor in the fifteenth century, when the scholastic philosophy began to give place to more rational studies, and the youth of many lands flocked in thousands to study within its walls. It is in respect of this seat of learning that Bologna stamps upon its coin *Bononia docet*, to which is added, in its coat of arms, *libertas*. Bologna was the second city in the States of the Church, and was sometimes complimented with the epithet, "Sister of Rome." It rivalled the capital in the number and sumptuousness of its monasteries and churches. One of the latter contains the magnificent tomb of St. Dominic, the founder of the order of Inquisitors. It is remarkable for its two towers, both ancient in even the days of Charles-the Asinelli, and the Garisenda, which lean like the Tower of Pisa.

Besides its ecclesiastical buildings, the city boasted not a few palatial edifices and monuments. One of these had already received Pope Clement under its roof, another was prepared for the reception of the emperor, whose sumptuous train was on the road. The site of Bologna is a commanding one. It leans against an Apennine, on whose summit rises the superb monastery of St. Michael in Bosco, and at its feet, stretching far to the south, are those fertile plains whose richness has earned for the city the appellation of Bologna Grassa. While the emperor, with an army of 20,000 behind him, advances by slow marches, and is drawing nigh its gates, let us turn to the Protestants of Germany.

Chapter 19: Meeting Between the Emperor and Pope at Bologna

Meeting of Protestants at Schmalkald-Complete Agreement in
Matters of Faith insisted on-Failure to Form a Defensive
League-Luther's Views on War-Division among the Protestants
Over-ruled-The Emperor at Bologna-Interviews between Charles
and Clement-The Emperor Proposes a Council-The Pope
Recommends the Sword- Campeggio and Gattinara-The Emperor's
Secret Thoughts-His Coronation-Accident-San Petronio and its
Spectacle-Rites of Coronation-Significancy of Each-The Emperor
sets out for Germany

Picture: Entrance to the Imperial Castle Nuremberg

Picture: Street in Coburg

On almost the same day on which Charles set out from Piacenza, Caden's letter, telling what reception the emperor had given their deputies, reached the Senate of Nuremberg. It created a profound sensation among the councillors. Their message had been repulsed, and their ambassadors arrested. This appeared to the Protestants tantamount to a declaration of hostilities on the part of the powerful and irate monarch. The Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse consulted together. They resolved to call a meeting of the Protestant princes and cities at an early day, to deliberate on the crisis that had arisen. The assembly met at Schmalkald on November 29, 1529. Its members were the Elector of Saxony; his son, John Frederick; Ernest and Francis, Dukes of Luneburg; Philip the Landgrave; the deputies of George, Margrave of Brandenburg; with representatives from the cities of Strasburg, Ulm, Nuremberg, Heilbronn, Reutlingen, Constance, Memmingen, Kempten, and Lindau.¹ The sitting of the assembly was marked by a striking incident. The emperor having released two of the ambassadors, and the third, Caden, having contrived to make his escape, they came to Schmalkald

¹Sleidan, bk. 7, p: 125.

just as the Protestants had assembled there, and electrifying them by their appearance in the Diet, gave a full account of all that had befallen them at the court of the emperor. Their statement did not help to abate the fears of the princes. It convinced them that evil was determined, that it behooved them to prepare against it; and the first and most effectual preparation, one would have thought, was to be united among themselves.

The necessity of union was felt, but unhappily it was sought in the wrong way. The assembly put the question, which shall we first discuss and arrange, the matter of religion or the matter of defense? It was resolved to take the question of religion first; for, said they, unless we are of one mind on it we cannot be united in the matter of defense.² Luther and his friends had recently revised the articles of the Marburg Conference in a strictly Lutheran sense. This revised addition is known as the “Schmalkald Articles” Under the tenth head a very important change was introduced: it was affirmed, without any ambiguity, that the very body and blood of Christ are present in the Sacrament, and the notion was condemned that the bread is simply bread.³ This was hardly keeping faith with the Reformed section of Christendom. But the blunder that followed was still greater. The articles so revised were presented to the deputies at Schmalkald, and their signatures demanded to them as the basis of a political league. Before combining for their common defense, all must be of one mind on the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper.

This course was simply deplorable. Apart from religious belief, there was enough of clear political ground on which to base a common resistance to a common tyranny. But in those days the distinction between the citizen and the church-member, between the duties and rights appertaining to the individual in his political and in his religious character, was not understood. All who would enter the proposed league must be of one mind on the tenet of consubstantiation. They must not only be Protestant, but Lutheran.

The deputies from Strasburg and Ulm resisted this sectarian policy. “We cannot sign these articles,” said they, “but are willing to unite with our brethren in a defensive league.” The Landgrave

²Seckendorf, lib. 2,sec. 16; Additio.

³The articles are given in Walch, 16, p. 681.

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of Hesse strongly argued that difference of opinion respecting the manner of Christ's presence in the Sacrament did not touch the foundations of Christianity, or endanger the salvation of the soul, and ought not to divide the Church of God; much less ought that difference to be made a ground of exclusion from such a league as was now proposed to be formed. But the Dukes of Saxony and Luneburg, who were strongly under Luther's influence, would hear of no confederation but with those who were ready to take the religious test. Ulm and Strasburg withdrew. The conference broke up, having first resolved that such as held Lutheran views, and only such, should meet at Nuremberg in the January following,⁴ to concert measures for resisting the apprehended attack of the emperor and the Pope. Thus the gulf between the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches was deepened at an hour when every sacrifice short of the principle of Protestantism itself ought to have been made to close it.

It was the views of Luther which triumphed at these discussions. He had beforehand strongly impressed his sentiments upon the Elector John, and both he and the Margrave of Brandenburg had come to be very thoroughly of one mind with regard to the necessity of being one in doctrine and creed before they could lawfully unite their arms for mutual defense. But to do Luther justice, he was led to the course he now adopted, not alone by his views on the Sacrament, but also by his abhorrence of war. He shrank in horror from unsheathing the sword in any religious matter. He knew that the religious federation would be followed by a military one. He saw in the background armies, battles, and a great effusion of the blood of man. He saw the religious life decaying amid the excitement of camps; he pictured the spiritual force ebbing away from Protestantism, and the strong sword of the Empire, in the issue, victorious over all. No, he said, let the sword rest in its scabbard; let the only sword unsheathed in a quarrel like this be the sword of the Spirit; let us spread the light. "Our Lord Christ," wrote he to the Elector of Saxony, "is mighty enough, and can well find ways and means to rescue us from danger, and bring the thoughts of the ungodly princes to nothing. The emperor's undertaking is a loud threat of the devil, but it will be powerless. As the Psalm says, 'it will fall on his own pate.' Christ

⁴Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 126. D'Aubigne, bk. 14, chap. 1.

is only trying us whether we are willing to obey His word or no, and whether we hold it for certain truth or not. We had rather die ten times over than that the Gospel should be a cause of blood or hurt by any act of ours. Let us rather patiently suffer, and as the Psalmist says, be accounted, as sheep for the slaughter; and instead of avenging or defending ourselves, leave room for God's wrath." If then Luther must make his choice between the sword and the stake, between seeing the Reformation triumph on the field of war and triumph on the field of martyrdom, he infinitely prefers the latter. The Protestant Church, like that of Rome, wars against error unto blood; but, unlike Rome, she sheds not the blood of others, she pours out her own.

Had the Lutheran princes and the Zwinglian chiefs at that hour united in a defensive league, they would have been able to have brought a powerful army into the field. The enthusiasm of their soldiers, as well as their numbers, was to be counted on in a trial of strength between them and their opponents. The German princes who still remained on the side of Rome they would have swept from the field—even the legions of the emperor would have found it hard to withstand them. But to have transferred the cause of Protestantism at that epoch from the pulpit, from the university, and the press, to the battle-field, would not have contributed to its final success. Without justifying Luther in the tenacity with which he clung to his dogma of consubstantiation, till Reformed Christendom was rent in twain, and without endorsing the judgment of the Schmalkald Conference, that men must be at one in matters of faith before they can combine for the defense of their political and religious rights, we must yet acknowledge that the division between the Lutheran and the Reformed, although deplorable in itself, was ruled to ward off a great danger from Protestantism, and to conduct it into a path where it was able to give far sublimer proofs of its heroism, and to achieve victories more glorious and more enduring than any it could have won by arms. It was marching on, though it knew it not, to a battle-field on which it was to win a triumph the fruits of which Germany and Christendom are reaping at this hour. Not with "confused noise and garments rolled in blood" was to be the battle to which the Protestants were now advancing. No wail of widow, no cry of orphan was to mingle with the paeans of its victors. That

battle was to be to history one of its memorable days. There, both the emperor and the Pope were to be routed. That great field was Augsburg.

[575] We return to Bologna, which in the interval has become the scene of dark intrigues and splendid fetes. The saloons are crowded with gay courtiers, legates, archbishops, ministers, and secretaries. Men in Spanish and Italian uniforms parade the streets; the church bells are ceaselessly tolled, and the roll of the drum continually salutes the ear; for religious ceremonies and military shows proceed without intermission. The palaces in which the Pope and the emperor are lodged are so closely contiguous that a wall only separates the one from the other. The barrier has been pierced with a door which allows Charles and Clement to meet and confer at all hours of the day and night. The opportunity is diligently improved. While others sleep they wake. Protestantism it mainly is that occasions so many anxious deliberations and sleepless hours to these two potentates. They behold that despised principle exalting its stature strangely and ominously from year to year. Can no spell be devised to master it? can no league be framed to bind it? It is in the hope of discovering some such expedient or enchantment that Clement and Charles so often summon their "wise counsellors" by day, or meet in secret and consult together alone when deep sleep rests on the eyelids of those around them.

But in truth the emperor brought to these meetings a double mind. Despite the oath he had taken on the confines of the Ecclesiastical States never to encroach upon the liberties of the Papal See,⁵ despite the lowly obeisance with which he saluted the Pope when Clement came forth to meet him at the gates of Bologna, and despite the edifying regularity with which he performed his devotions, Charles thought of the great Spanish monarchy of which he was the head in the first place, and the Pope in the second place. To tear up the Protestant movement by the roots would suit Clement admirably; but would it equally suit Charles? This was the question with the emperor. He was now coming to see that to extinguish Luther would be to leave the Pope without a rival. Clement would then be independent of the sword of Spain, and would hold his head higher

⁵Sleidan, 7, 126. Robertson, *Hist. Charles V.*, 5, 171.

than ever. This was not for Charles's interests, or the glory of the vast Empire over which his scepter was swayed. The true policy was to tolerate Wittemberg, taking care that it did not become strong, and play it off, when occasion required, against Rome. He would muzzle it: he would hold the chain in his hand, and have the unruly thing under his own control. Luther and Duke John and Landgrave Philip would dance when he piped, and mourn when he lamented; and when the Pope became troublesome, he would lengthen the chain in which he held the hydra of Lutheranism, and reduce Clement to submission by threatening to let loose the monster on him. By being umpire Charles would be master. This was the emperor's innermost thought, as we now can read it by his subsequent conduct. In youth Charles was politic: it was not till his later years that he became a bigot.

The statesmen of Charles's council were also divided on the point. The emperor was attended on this journey into Germany by two men of great experience and distinguished abilities, Campeggio and Gattinara, who advocated opposite policies. Campeggio was for dragging every Protestant to the stake and utterly razing Wittemberg. There is an "Instruction" of his to the emperor still extant, discovered by the historian Ranke at Rome, in which this summary process is strongly recommended to Charles. ⁶ "If there be any," said the legate Campeggio in this "Instruction," referring to the German princes—"If there be any, which God forbid, who will obstinately persist in this diabolical path, his majesty may put hand to fire and sword, and radically tear out this cursed and venomous plant."

"The first step in this process would be to confiscate property, civil or ecclesiastical, in Germany as well as in Hungary and Bohemia. For with regard to heretics, this is lawful and right. Is the mastery over them thus obtained, then must holy inquisitors be appointed, who shall tramp out every remnant of them, proceeding against them as the Spaniards did against the Moors in Spain." ⁷ Such was the simple plan of this eminent dignitary of the Papal Church. He would set up the stake, why should he not? and it would continue

⁶Instructio data Caesari a Reverendmo Campeggio in Dieta Augustana, 1530. "I found it," says Ranke, "in a foot-note, in a Roman library, in the handwriting of the time, and beyond all doubt authentic." (Ranke, vol. I., p. 85; Bohn's edition, 1847.)

⁷Ranke, bk. 1, chap. 3.

to blaze till there was not another Protestant in all Christendom to burn. When the last disciple of the Gospel had sunk in ashes, then would the Empire enjoy repose, and the Church reign in glory over a pacified and united Christendom. If a little heretical blood could procure so great a blessing, would not the union of Christendom be cheaply purchased?

Not so did Gattinara counsel. He too would heal the schism and unite Christendom, but by other means. He called not for an army of executioners, but for an assembly of divines. "You (Charles) are the head of the Empire," said he, "you (the Pope) the head of the Church. It is your duty to provide, by common accord, against unprecedented wants. Assemble the pious men of all nations, and let a free Council deduce from the Word of God a scheme of doctrine such as may be received by every people."⁸ The policies of the two counsellors stood markedly distinct- the sword, a Council.

[576] Clement VII. was startled as if a gulf had yawned at his feet. The word Council has been a name of terror to Popes in all ages. The mention of it conjured up before the Pontifical imagination an equal, or it might be a superior authority to their own, and so tended to obscure the glory and circumscribe the dominion of the Papal chair. Pius IX. has succeeded at last in laying that terrible bugbear by the decree of infallibility, which makes him absolute monarch of the Church. But in those ages, when the infallibility was assumed rather than decreed to be the personal attribute of the Popes, no threat was more dreadful than the proposal, sure to be heard at every crisis, to assemble a Council. But Clement had reasons peculiar to himself for regarding the proposition with abhorrence. He was a bastard; he had got possession of his chair by means not altogether blameless; and he had squandered the revenues of his see upon his family inheritance of Florence; and a reckoning would be exceedingly inconvenient. Though Luther himself had suddenly entered the council-chamber, Clement could not have been more alarmed and irritated than he was by the proposal of Gattinara. He did not see what good a Council would do, unless it were to let loose the winds of controversy all over Europe. "It is not," said he, "by the decrees of Councils, but by

⁸Oratio de Congressu Bononiensi, in Melanchthonis, Orationum, 4, 87, and Caelestinus, Hist. Council, 1530. Augustae, 1, 10. D'Aubigne, bk. 9, chap. 1.

the edge of the sword, that we should decide controversies.⁹

But Gattinara had not made his proposal without previous consultation with the emperor, whose policy it suited. Charles now rose, and indicated that his views lay in the direction of those of his minister; and the Pope, concealing his disgust, seeing how the wind set, said that he would think further on the matter. He hoped to work upon the mind of the emperor in private.

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These discussions were prolonged till the end of January. The passes of the Alps were locked, avalanches and snow-drifts threatened the man who would scale their precipices at that season, and the climate of Bologna being salubrious, Charles was in no haste to quit so agreeable an abode. The ecclesiastical potentate continued to advocate the sword, and the temporal monarch to call for a Council. It is remarkable that each distrusted the weapon with which he was best acquainted. "The sword will avail nought in this affair," urged the emperor; "let us vanquish our opponents in argument." "Reason," exclaimed the Pope, "will not serve our turn; let us resort to force." But, though all considerations of humanity had been put aside, the question of the practicability of bringing all the Protestants to the scaffold was a serious one. Was the emperor able to do this? He stood at the head of Europe, but it was prudent not too severely to test his superiority. The Lutheran princes were by no means despicable, either in spirit or resources. The Kings of France and England, though they disrelished the Protestant doctrines, had come to know that the Protestant party was an important political element; and it was just possible their majesties might prefer that Christendom should remain divided, rather than that its unity should be restored by a holocaust like that advocated by Campeggio. And then there was the Turk, who, although he had now retreated into his own domain, might yet, should a void so vast occur as would be created by the slaughter of the Protestants, transfer his standards from the shores of the Bosphorus to the banks of the Danube. It was clear that the burning of 100,000 Protestants or so would be only the beginning of the drama. The Pope would most probably approve of so kindly a blaze; but might it not end in setting other

⁹"Non concilii decretis sed armis controversias dirimendas." (Scultet., p. 248. Maimbourg, 2, 177. Fra Paolo Sarpi, *Histoire du Concile de Trent*, tom. 1, pp. 95-97; Basle, 1738.)

States besides Germany on fire, and the Spanish monarchy among the rest? Charles, therefore, stuck to his idea of a Council; and being master, as Gattinara reminded him, he was able to have the last word in the conferences.

Meanwhile, till a General Council could be convened, and as preparatory to it, the emperor, on the 20th January, 1530, issued a summons for a Diet of the States of Germany to meet at Augsburg on the 8th April. ¹⁰ The summons was couched in terms remarkably gracious, and surely, if conciliation was to be attempted, at least as a first measure, it was wise to go about it in a way fitted to gain the object the emperor had in view. "Let us put an end to all discord," he said; "let us renounce our antipathies; let us all fight under one and the same leader-Jesus Christ-and let us strive thus to meet in one communion, one Church, and one unity." ¹¹

What a relief to the Protestants of Germany! The great sword of the emperor which had hung over their heads, suspended by a single thread, was withdrawn, and the olive-branch was held out to them instead. "The heart of kings is in the hand of God."

One thing only was lacking to complete the grandeur of Charles, namely, that he should receive the imperial diadem from the hands of the Pope. He would have preferred to have had the ceremony performed in the Eternal City; the act would have borrowed additional lustre from the place where it was done; but reasons of State compelled him to select Bologna. The Pope, so Fra Paolo Sarpi hints, did not care to put so much honour upon Charles in the presence of a city which had been sacked by his soldiers just two years before; and Bologna lay conveniently on the emperor's road to the Diet of Augsburg. Charles had already been crowned as Emperor of Germany at Aix-la-Chapelle. He now (22nd February) received the iron crown as King of Lombardy, and the golden one (24th February) as Emperor of the Romans. The latter day, that on which the golden crown was placed on his brow, he accounted specially auspicious. It was the anniversary of his birth, and also of the victory of Pavia, the turning-point of his greatness. The coronation was a histrionic

¹⁰Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 126. ¹¹D'Aubigne, bk. 9, chap. 1.

¹¹D'Aubigne, bk. 9, chap. 1.

sermon upon the theological and political doctrines of the age, and as such it merits our attention.

Charles received his crown at the foot of the altar. The sovereignty thus gifted was not however absolute; it was conditioned and limited in the manner indicated by the ceremonies that accompanied the investiture, each of which had its meaning. In the great Cathedral of San Petronio—the scene of the august ceremony—were erected two thrones. That destined for the Pope rose half-a-foot higher than the one which the emperor was to occupy. The Pontiff was the first to take his seat; next came the emperor, advancing by a foot-bridge thrown across the piazza which separated the palace in which he was lodged from the cathedral where he was to be crowned. ¹² The erection was not strong enough to sustain the weight of the numerous and magnificent suite that attended him. It broke down immediately behind the emperor, precipitating part of his train on the floor of the piazza, amid the debris of the structure and the crowd of spectators. The incident, so far from discomposing the monarch, was interpreted by him into an auspicious omen. He had been rescued, by a Power whose favorite he was, from possible destruction, to wield those high destinies which were this day to receive a new sanction from the Vicar of God. He surveyed the scene of the catastrophe for a moment, and passed on to present himself before the Pontiff.

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The first part of the ceremony was the investiture of the emperor with the office of deacon. The government of those ages was a theocracy. The theory of this principle was that the kingdoms of the world were ruled by God in the person of His Vicar, and no one had a valid right to exercise any part of that Divine jurisdiction unless he were part and parcel of that sacred class to whom this rule had been committed. The emperor, therefore, before receiving the scepter

¹²In front of the palace at Bologna is a tablet with an inscription, in which this and other particulars of the coronation are mentioned: “Fenestra haec ad dextrum fuit porta Praetoria; et egressus Caesar per pontem sublicium, in AEdem D. Petronii deductus. Sacris ritibus peractis a Pont. Max. auream coronam Imperii caeteraque insignia accepit.” (The window on the right was the Praetorian gate, out of which Caesar passed by a wooden bridge to the temple of San Petronio. The sacred rites being performed by the supreme Pontiff, he received the golden crown and the rest of the imperial insignia.)—Maximilian Misson, *Travels*, vol. 2, part 1; Lond., 1739.

from the Pope, had to be incorporated with the ecclesiastical estate. Two canons approached, and stripping him of the signs of royalty, arrayed him in surplice and amice. Charles had now the honour of being a deacon of St. Peter's and of St. John Lateranus. The Pope leaving his throne proceeded to the altar and sang mass, the new deacon waiting upon him, and performing the customary services. Then kneeling down the emperor received the Sacrament from the Pope's hands.

Charles now reseated himself on his throne, and the princess approaching him removed his deacon's dress, and robed him in the jewelled mantle which, woven on the looms of the East, had been brought from Constantinople for the coronation of the Emperors of Germany.

The emperor now put himself on bended knee before Clement VII. First the Pontiff, taking a horn of oil, anointed Charles; then he gave him a naked sword; next he put into his hands the golden orb; and last of all he placed on his head the imperial crown, which was studded all round with precious stones. With the sword was the emperor to pursue and smite the enemies of the Church; the orb symbolised the world, which he was to govern by the grace of the Holy Father; the diadem betokened the authority by which all this was to be done, and which was given of him who had put the crown upon his head; the oil signified that Divine puissance which, shed upon him from the head of that anointed body of which Charles had now become a member, would make him invincible in fighting the battles of the faith. Kissing the white cross that adorned the Pope's red slipper, Charles swore to defend with all his powers the rights and liberties of the Church of Rome.

When we examine the magnificent symbolisation acted out in the Cathedral of Bologna, what do we see? We behold but one ruler, the head of all government and power, the fountain of all virtues and graces-the Vicar of the Eternal King. Out of the plenitude of his great office he constitutes other monarchs and judges, permitting them to take part with him in his superhuman Divine jurisdiction. They are his vicars just as he is the Vicar of the Eternal Monarch. They govern by him, they rule for him, and they are accountable to him. They are the vassals of his throne, the lictors of his judgment-seat. To him appertains the power of passing sentence, to them the humble

office of using the sword he has put into their hands in executing it. In this one immense monarch, the Pope namely, all authority, rights, liberties are comprehended. The State disappears as a distinct and independent society: it is absorbed in the Church as the Church is absorbed in her head-occupying the chair of St. Peter. It was against this hideous tyranny that Protestantism rose up. It restored to society the Divine monarchy of conscience. The theocracy of Rome was uprooted, and with it sank the Divine right of priests and kings, and all the remains of feudalism.

It was now the beginning of March. Spring had opened the passes of the Alps, and Charles and his men-at-arms went on their way to meet the Diet he had summoned at Augsburg.

Chapter 20: Preparations for the Augsburg Diet

Charles Crosses the Tyrol-Looks down on Germany-Events in his
 Absence-His Reflections-Fruitlessness of his Labours-Opposite
 Realisations-All Things meant by Charles for the Hurt turn out to
 the Advantage of Protestantism-An Unseen Leader-The Emperor
 Arrives at Innsbruck-Assembling of the Princes to the Diet-Journey
 of the Elector of Saxony-Luther's Hymn-Luther left at
 Coburg-Courage of the Protestant Princes-Protestant Sermons in
 Augsburg-Popish Preachers-The Torgau Articles-Prepared by
 Melancthon- Approved by Luther

Picture: Luther in Coburg Castle: the Diet of Jackdaws

The emperor was returning to Germany after an absence of nine years. As, in the first days of May, he slowly climbed the summits of the Tyrolese Alps, and looked down from their northern slopes upon the German plains, he had time to reflect on all that had happened since his departure. The years which had passed since he last saw these plains had been full of labor, and yet how little had he reaped from all the toil he had undergone, and the great vexation he had experienced! The course affairs had taken had been just the opposite of that which he had wished and fully expected. By some strange fatality the fruits of all his campaigns had eluded him. His crowning piece of good fortune had been Pavia; that event had brought his rival Francis as a captive to Madrid, and placed himself for a moment at the head of Europe; and yet this brilliant victory had turned out in the end more damaging to the victor than to the vanquished. It had provoked the League of Cognac, in which the kings of Europe, with the Pontiff at their head, united to resist a power which they deemed dangerous to their own, and curb an ambition that they now saw to be boundless. The League of Cognac, in its turn, had recoiled on the head of the man who was its chief deviser. The tempest it had raised, and which those who evoked it intended should burst on the head-quarters of Lutheranism, rolled away in the direction of

Rome, and discharged its lightning-bolts on the City of the Seven Hills, inflicting on the wealth and glory of the Popes, on the art and splendor of their capital, a blow which no succeeding age has been able to repair.

For the moment all was again quiet. The Pope and the King of France had become the friends of the emperor. The Turks who had appeared in greater numbers, and penetrated farther into Europe than they had ever before been able to do, had suddenly retreated within their own dominions, and thus all things conspired to remove every obstacle out of Charles's path that might prevent his long-meditated visit to Germany. The emperor was now going to consolidate the peace that had so happily followed the tempest, and put the top-stone upon his own power by extinguishing the Wittemberg movement, a task not quite so hard, he thought, as that from which he was at this moment returning, the destruction of the League of Cognac.

And yet when he thought of the Wittemberg movement, which he was advancing to confront, he must have had some misgivings. His former experience of it must have taught him that instead of being the easiest to settle of the many matters he had on hand, it was precisely the one of all others the most difficult. He had won victories over Francis, he had won victories over the Pope, but he had won no victory over the monk. The dreaded Suleiman had vanished at his approach, but Luther kept his ground and refused to flee. Why was this? Nay, not only had the Reformer not fallen before him, but every step the emperor had taken against him had only lifted Luther higher in the sight of men, and strengthened his influence in Christendom. At the Diet of Worms, 1521, he had fulminated his ban against the heresiarch. He did not for a moment doubt that a few weeks, or a few months at the most, and he would have the satisfaction of seeing that ban executed, and the Rhine bearing the ashes of Luther, as a hundred years before it had done those of Huss, to the ocean, there to bury him and his cause in an eternal sepulcher. Far different had the result been. The emperor's ban had chased the Reformer to the Wartburg, and there, exempt from every other distraction, Luther had prepared an instrumentality a hundred times more powerful than all his other writings and labours for the propagation of his movement. The imperial ban, if it considered Luther to a brief captivity, had liberated the Word of God, imprisoned

[581] in a dead language, and now it was traversing the length and breadth of the Fatherland, and speaking to prince and peasant, to baron and burgher in their own mother tongue. This, as Charles knew to his infinite chagrin, was all that he had reaped as yet from the Edict of Worms.

He essayed a second time to extinguish but in reality to strengthen the movement. He convoked a Diet of the Empire at Spires in 1526, to take steps for executing the edict which had been passed with their concurrence five years before at Worms. Now it will be seen whether the bolt does not fall and crush the monk. Again the result is exactly the opposite of what the emperor had so confidently anticipated. The Diet decreed that, till a General Council should meet, every one should be at liberty to act in religious matters as he pleased. This was in fact an edict of toleration, and henceforward the propagation of Protestant truth throughout the dominions of the princes was to go on under sanction of the Diet. The movement was now surrounded by legal securities. How irritating to the potentate who thought that he was working skilfully for its overthrow!

Twice had Charles miscarried; but he will make a third attempt and it will prosper; so he assures himself. In 1529 he convokes the Diet anew at Spires. He sent a threatening message from Spain commanding the princes, by the obedience they owed him as emperor, and under peril of ban, to execute the edict against Luther. It was now that the Lutheran princes unfurled their great Protest, and took up that position in the Empire and before all Christendom which they have ever since, through all variety of fortune, maintained. Every time the emperor puts forth his hand, it is not to kill but to infuse new life into the movement; it is to remove impediments from its path and help it onward.

Even the dullest cannot fail to perceive that these most extraordinary events, in which everything meant for the destruction of the Protestant movement turned out for its furtherance, did not originate with Luther. He had neither the sagacity to devise them nor the power to control them. Nor did they take their rise from Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony; nor from Philip the Magnanimous, Landgrave of Hesse. Much less did they owe their origin to Charles, for nothing did he less intend to accomplish than what really took

place. Let us then indulge in no platitudes about these men. Luther indeed was wise, and not less courageous than wise; but in what did his wisdom consist? It consisted in his profound submission to the will of One whom he saw guiding the movement through intricacies where his own counsels would have utterly wrecked it. And in what lay his courage? In this: in his profound faith in One whose arm he saw shielding Protestantism in the midst of dangers where, but for this protection, both the Reformer and the cause would have speedily perished. In these events Luther beheld the footprints of One whom an ancient Hebrew sage styles “wonderful in counsel, excellent in working.”

The emperor and his suite, a numerous and brilliant one, arrived at Innsbruck in the beginning of May. He halted at this romantic little town that he might make himself more closely acquainted with the state of Germany, and decide upon the line of tactics to be adopted. The atmosphere on this side of the Alps differed sensibly from the fervid air which he had just left on the south of them. All he saw and heard where he now was told him that Lutheranism was strongly entrenched in the Fatherland, and that he should need to put forth all the power and craft of which he was master in order to dislodge it.

The appearance of the emperor on the heights of the Tyrol revived the fears of the Protestants. As when the vulture is seen in the sky, and there is silence and cowering in the groves, so was it with the inhabitants of the plains, now that the mailed cohorts of Rome were seen on the mountains above them. And there was some cause for alarm. With the emperor came Campeggio, as his evil genius, specially commissioned by the Pope to take care of Charles,¹ and see that he did not make any compromise with the Lutherans, or entangle himself by any rash promise of a General Council. The legate had nothing but the old cure to recommend for the madness which had infected the Germans—the sword. Gattinara, who had held back the hand of Charles from using that weapon against Protestantism, and who had come as far as Innsbruck, here sickened and died.² Melanchthon mourned his death as a loss to the cause of moderate counsels. “Shall we meet our adversary with arms?” asked the

¹Fra Paolo Sarpi, tom. 1, p. 99.

²Sleidan, 7, 127. Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 21; Additio 4.

Protestant princes in alarm. “No,” replied Luther, “let no man resist the emperor: if he demands a sacrifice, lead me to the altar.”³ Even Maimbourg acknowledges that “Luther conducted himself on this occasion in a manner worthy of a good man. He wrote to the princes to divert them from their purpose, telling them that the cause of religion was to be defended, not by the force of arms, but by sound arguments, by Christian patience, and by firm faith in the omnipotent God.”⁴ The Reformer strove at the same time to uphold the hearts of all by directing their eyes to heaven. His noble hymn, “A strong Tower is our God,” began to be heard in all the churches in Germany.⁵ Its heroic strains, pealed forth by thousands of voices, and swelling grandly aloft, kindled the soul and augmented the confidence and courage of the Protestant host. It continued to be sung in the public assemblies during all the time the Diet was in session.

The emperor, dating from Bologna, January 21st, 1530, had summoned the Diet to meet on April 8th. The day was now at hand, and the Protestant princes began to prepare for their journey to Augsburg. On Sunday, April 3rd, the Elector of Saxony, and the nobles and theologians who were to accompany him, assembled in the castle-church, Torgau, to join in prayer that God would inspire them with a spirit becoming the crisis that had arrived. Luther preached from the text, “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven.”⁶ The key-note struck by the sermon was worthily sustained by the magnanimity of the princes at Augsburg. On the afternoon of the same day the elector set out, accompanied by John Frederick, his son; Francis, Duke of Luneburg; Wolfgang, Prince of Anhalt; and Albert, Count of Mansfeld. The theologians whom the elector took with him to advise with at the Diet were Luther, Melancthon, and Jonas. To these Spalatin was afterwards added. They made a fine appearance as they rode out of Torgau, escorted by a troop of 160 horsemen,⁷ in scarlet cloaks embroidered with gold. But the spectators saw them depart with many anxious thoughts. They were going to confess

³Seckendorf., lib. 2, sec. 20, pp. 150, 151.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Seckerdorf, lib. 2, sec. 20, pp. 150, 151.

⁶Matthew 10:32.

⁷Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 21, p. 152.

a faith which the emperor had proscribed. Would they not draw upon themselves the tempest of his wrath? Would they return in like fashion as they had seen them go? The hymn, "A strong Tower is our God," would burst forth at intervals from the troop, and rising in swelling strains which drowned the tramp of their horses and the clang of their armor, increased yet more the courage in which their journey was begun, continued, and ended.

On the eve of Palm Sunday they arrived at Weimar. They halted here over Sunday, and Luther again preached. Resuming their journey early in the week, they came at the close of it to the elector's Castle of Coburg, on the banks of the Itz; the Reformer delivering an address, or preaching a sermon, at the end of every day's march.⁸ Starting from Coburg on the 23rd of April, the cavalcade proceeded on its way, passing through the towns of Barnberg and Nuremberg, and on the 2nd of May the elector and his company entered the gates of Augsburg. It had been confidently predicted that Prince John of Saxony would not attend the Diet. He was too obnoxious to the emperor, it was said, to beard the lion in his den. To the amazement of every one,⁹ the elector was the first of all the princes to appear on the scene.

Soon the other princes, Popish and Protestant, began to arrive. Their entrance into Augsburg was with no little pomp. They came attended by their retainers, whose numbers and equipments were on a scale that corresponded with the power and wealth of the lord they followed. Clad in armor, bearing banners blazoned with devices, and proclaiming their approach with sound of drum and clarion, they looked more like men mustering for battle than assembling for the settlement of the creed of Christendom, the object specified in the Emperor's summons. But in those days no discussion, even on religious questions, was thought to have much weight unless it was conducted amid the symbols of authority and the blaze of power. On the 12th of May the Landgrave of Hesse entered Augsburg, accompanied by 120 horsemen. And three days thereafter the deputies of the good town of Nuremberg arrived to take part in the deliberations, bringing with them Osiander, the Protestant pastor of that place.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 21, p. 153.

Since the memorable Diet at Worms, 1521, Germany had not been so deeply and universally agitated as it was at this hour. A decisive trial of strength was at hand between the two parties. Great and lasting issues must come out of the Diet. The people followed their deputies to Augsburg with their prayers. They saw the approach of the tempest in that of the emperor and his legions; but the nearer he came the louder they raised the song in all their churches and assemblies, "A strong Tower is our God." The fact that Charles was to be present, as well as the gravity of the crisis, operated in the way of bringing out a full attendance of princes and deputies. Over and above the members of the Diet there came a vast miscellaneous assemblage, from all the cities and provinces of Germany: bishops, scholars, citizens, soldiers, idlers, all flocked thither, drawn by a desire to be present on an occasion which had awakened the hopes of some, the fears of others, and the interest of all.

[583] "Is it safe to trust ourselves in a walled city with the emperor?" asked some of the more timid Protestants. They thought that the emperor was drawing all the Lutherans into his net; and, once entrapped, that he would offer them all up in one great holocaust to Clement, from whose presence, the anointing oil still fresh upon him, the emperor had just come. Charles, to do him justice, was too humane and too magnanimous to think of such a thing. The venom which in after years vented itself in universal exterminations, had not yet been engendered, unless in solitary bosoms such as Campeggio's. The leaders of the Protestants refused to entertain the unworthy suspicion. The aged John, Elector of Saxony, set the example of courage, being the first to arrive on the scene. ¹⁰ The last to arrive were the Roman Catholic princes, Duke George of Saxony, Duke William of Bavaria, and the Elector Joachim of Brandenburg. They had this excuse, however, that before repairing to Augsburg they had gone to pay their respects to the emperor at Innsbruck, and to encourage him to persevere in his resolution of putting down the Wittenberg movement, by soft measures if possible, by strong ones if need were. ¹¹

¹⁰Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 127.

¹¹Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 21; Additio 2.

Meanwhile, till the Diet should be opened, occasion was taken of the vast concourse at Augsburg, assembled from the most distant parts, and embracing men of all conditions, to diffuse more widely a knowledge of the Protestant doctrines.

Scattered on this multitude the seeds of truth would be borne wide over all Germany, and floated to even remoter lands. The elector and the landgrave opened the cathedrals and churches, and placed in their pulpits the preachers who had accompanied them from Saxony and Hesse. Crowded congregations, day by day, hung upon their lips. They fed eagerly on the bread of the Word. The preachers were animated by the thought that they had all Germany, in a sense, for their audience. Although the emperor had sought to inflict a deadly wound on Catholicism, no more effectual way could he have taken than to summon this Diet. The Papists were confounded by the courage of the Lutherans; they trembled when they thought what the consequences must be, and they resolved to counteract the effects of the Lutheran sermons by preaching a purer orthodoxy. To this there could be no possible objection on the part of the Protestants. The suffragan and chaplain of the bishop mounted the pulpit, but only to discover when there that they had not learned how to preach. They vociferated at their utmost pitch; but the audience soon got tired of the noise, and remarking, with a significant shrug, that “these predicants were blockheads,”¹² retreated, leaving them to listen to the echoes of their own voice in their empty cathedrals.

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When the elector set out for Augsburg, his cavaliers, in their scarlet cloaks, were not his only attendants. He invited, as we have seen, Luther, Melancthon, and Jonas¹³ to accompany him to the Diet. On these would devolve the chief task of preparing the weapons with which the princes were to do battle, and directing the actual combatants how to deal the blow. On the journey, however, it occurred to the elector that over Luther there still hung the anathema of the Pope and the ban of the Empire. It might not, therefore, be safe to carry the Reformer to Augsburg while the Edict of Worms was still unrepealed. Even granting that the elector should be able to shield him from harm, might not Charles construe Luther’s appearance

¹²Corpus Ref., 2, 86: “Audires homines stupidissimos atque etiam sensu communi carentes.”

¹³Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 127.

at the Diet into a personal affront? ¹⁴ It was resolved accordingly that Luther should remain at Coburg. Here it was easy to keep him informed of all that was passing in the Diet, and to have his advice at any moment. Luther would thus be present, although invisible, at Augsburg.

The Reformer at once acquiesced in this arrangement. The Castle of Coburg, on the banks of the river Itz, overlooking the town, was assigned him for his residence. From this place we find him, on April the 22nd, writing to Melanchthon: "I shall make a Zion of this Sinai; I shall build here three tabernacles-one to the Psalms, another to the Prophets, and a third to Aesop." He was at that time diversifying his graver labours by translating Aesop's fables. "I reside," he continues, "in a vast abode which overlooks the city; I have the keys of all its apartments. There are scarcely thirty persons within the fortress, of whom twelve are watchers by night, and two others, sentinels, who are constantly posted on the castle heights."

The Elector John, with statesman-like sagacity as well as Christian zeal—a fine union, of which that age presents many noble examples—saw the necessity of presenting to the Diet a summary of Protestant doctrine. Nothing of the sort as yet existed. The Protestant faith was to be learned, first of all in the Scriptures, next in the numerous and widely-diffused writings of Luther and other theologians, and lastly in the general belief and confession of the Christian people. But, over and above these, it was desirable to have some systematized, accurate, and authoritative statement of the Protestant doctrines to present to the Diet now about to convene. It was due to the Reformers themselves, to whom it would serve as a bond of union, and whose apology or defense it would be to the world; and it was due to their foes, who it was to be supposed in charity were condemning what, to a large extent, they were ignorant of. It is worthy of notice that the first suggestion of what has since become so famous, under the name of the Augsburg Confession, came, not from the clergy of the Protestant Church, but from the laity. When political actors appear before us on this great stage, we do them only justice to say that they were inspired by Christian motives, and aimed at gaining great spiritual ends. John of Saxony and Philip of

¹⁴Pallavicino, lib. 3, cap. 3, p. 193. Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 21, p. 153.

Hesse did not covet the spoils of Rome: they sought the vindication of the truth and the reformation of society.

The Elector of Saxony issued an order in the middle of March (1530) to the theologians of Wittemberg to draw up a summary of the Protestant faith. ¹⁵ It was meant to set forth concisely the main doctrines which the Protestants held, and the points in which they differed from Rome. Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas, and Pomeranus jointly undertook the task. Their labours were embodied in seventeen articles, ¹⁶ and were delivered to the elector at Torgau, and hence their name, the "Torgau Articles." These articles, a few weeks afterwards, were enlarged and remodeled by Melanchthon, with a view to their being read in the Diet as the Confession of the Protestants. ¹⁷ The great scholar and divine devoted laborious days and nights to this important work, amid the distractions and din of Augsburg. Nothing did he spare which a penetrating judgment and a lovely genius could do to make this Confession, in point of its admirable order, its clearness of statement, and beauty of style, such as would charm the ears and lead captive the understandings and hearts of the Roman Catholics in the Diet. "They must listen," said he, "in spite of themselves." Everything was put in the least offensive form. Wittemberg and Rome were brought as near to each other as the eternal barrier between the two permitted. [585]

The document when finished was sent to Luther and approved by him. In returning it, the Reformer accompanied it with a letter to the elector, in which he spoke of it in the following terms: - "I have read over Master Philip's apology: it pleases me right well, and I know not how to better or alter anything in it, and will not hazard the attempt; for I cannot tread so softly and gently. Christ our Lord help that it bear much and great fruit; as we hope and pray. Amen."

Will the Diet listen? Will the genius of Melanchthon triumph over the conqueror of Pavia, and induce him to withdraw his ban and sit down at the feet of Luther, or rather of Holy Scripture? These were the questions men were eagerly asking.

¹⁵Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 20, p. 151.

¹⁶Confessio Christianae Doctrines et Fidei, per D. Martinum Lutherum; edita a P.Mullero, Lipsiae et Jenae, 1705

¹⁷Corpus Ref., 2, 40.

Chapter 21: Arrival of the Emperor at Augsburg and Opening of the Diet

Arrivals—The Archbishop of Cologne, etc—Charles—Pleasantries of Luther—Diet of the Crows—An Allegory—Intimation of the Emperor's Coming—The Princes Meet him at the Torrent Lech—Splendor of the Procession—Seckendorf's Description—Enters Augsburg—Accident—Rites in the Cathedral—Charles's Interview with the Protestant Princes—Demands the Silencing of their Preachers—Protestants Refuse—Final Arrangement—Opening of Diet—Procession of Corpus Christi—Shall the Elector Join the Procession?—Sermon of Papal Nuncio—The Turk and Lutherans Compared—Calls on Charles to use the Sword against the Latter

Picture: Meeting of the Emperor Charles and the Protestant Princes

Scarcely a day passed in these stirring weeks without some stately procession entering at the gates of Augsburg. On the 17th of May came the Archbishop of Cologne, and on the day following the Archbishop of Mainz. A few days later, George, Margrave of Brandenburg, the ally of the elector, passed through the streets, with an escort of 200 horsemen in green liveries and armor. A German wagon, filled with his learned men and preachers, brought up the rear. At last came the crown and flower of all these grand spectacles. Charles, on whose head were united the crown of Spain, the iron crown of Lombardy, and the imperial diadem, now twice bestowed, made his entry into Augsburg with great pomp on the 15th of June, 1530. It was long past the day (April 8th) for which the Diet had been summoned; but the emperor will journey as his many weighty affairs will permit, and the princes must wait.

While the emperor delayed, and the Diet was not opened, and the courier from Augsburg posted along the highway, which ran close to the foot of the Castle of Coburg, without halting to send in letter or message to its occupant, the anxieties of Luther increased from

one day to another. The Reformer, to beguile his thoughts, issued his edict convoking a Diet at Coburg. The summons was instantly obeyed. Quite a crowd of members assembled, and Luther does ample justice to their eloquence. "You are about to go to Augsburg," says he, writing to Spalatin (May 9th), "without having examined the auspices, and not knowing as yet when they will permit you to commence. As for me, I am in the thick of another Diet. Here I see magnanimous kings, dukes, and nobles consult over the affairs of their realm, and with unremitting clang proclaim their decrees and dogmas through the air. They do not meet in caves, or dens of courts called palaces; but the spacious heaven is their roof, verdant grass and foliage their pavement, and their walls are wide as the ends of the earth. They are not arrayed in gold and silk, but all wear a vestment black, have eyes of a grey hue, and speak in the same music, save the diversity of youth and age. Horses and harness they spurn at, and move on the rapid wheels of wings. As far as I understand the herald of their decrees, they have unanimously resolved to wage this whole year a war on barley, oats, and every kind of grain; and great deeds will be done. Here we sit, spectators of this Diet, and, to our great joy and comfort, observe and hear how the princes, lords, and Estates of the Empire are all singing so merrily and living so heartily. But it gives us especial pleasure to remark with what knight-like air they swing their tails, stroke their bills, tilt at one another, and strike and parry; so that we believe they will win great honour over the wheat and barley."

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So far the allegory. It is told with much naive pleasantry. But the Reformer appends a moral, and some who may have enjoyed the story may not quite relish the interpretation. "It seems to me," says he, "that these rooks and jackdaws are after all nothing else but the sophists and Papists, with their preachings and writings, who will fain present themselves in a heap, and make us listen to their lovely voices and beautiful sermons." This correspondence he dates from "the Region of the Birds," or "the Diet of the Jackdaws."

This and other similar creations were but a moment's pause in the midst of Herculean labours and of anxious and solemn thoughts. But Luther's humor was irrepressible, and its outburst was never more likely to happen than when he was encompassed by tragic events. These sallies were like the light breaking in golden floods through

the dark thunder-clouds. They revealed, moreover, a consciousness on the part of the Reformer of the true grandeur of his position, and that the drama, at the center of which he stood, was far more momentous than that in which Charles was playing his part. From his elevation, he could look down upon the pomp of thrones and the pageantries of empire, and make merry with them. He had but to touch them with his satire, and straightway their glory was gone, and their hollowness laid bare. It was not so with the spiritual forces he was laboring to set in motion in the world. These forces needed not to array themselves in scarlet and gold embroideries to make themselves grand, or to borrow the help of cannon and armed cohorts to give them potentiality.

At last Charles moved from Innsbruck, and set out for Augsburg. On the 6th of June he reached Munich, and made his entry through streets hung with tapestry, and thronged with applauding crowds. On the 15th of June a message reached Augsburg that on that day the emperor would make his entrance into the city.

The electors, counts, and knights marshalled early in the afternoon and set out to meet Charles. They halted on the banks of the torrent Lech, which rolls down from the Alps and falls into the Danube. They took up their position on a rising ground, whence they might descry the imperial approach. The aspect of the road told that something extraordinary was going forward. There rolled past the princes all the afternoon, as had been the case from an early hour in the morning, a continuous stream of horses and baggage trains, of wagons and foot-passengers, of officers of the emperor's household, and strangers hastening to enjoy the spectacle; the crack of whip, the note of horn, and the merry laugh of idle sight-seer enlivening their march. Three hours wore away, still the emperor was not in sight. The sun was now nearing the horizon. At length a cloud of dust was seen in the distance; its dusky volume came nearer and nearer; as it approached the murmur of voices grew louder, and now, close at hand, its opening folds disclosed to view the first ranks of the imperial cavalcade. The princes leaped from their saddles, and awaited Charles's approach. The emperor, on seeing the princes, courteously dismounted and shook hands with them, and the two companies blended into one on the bank of the stream. Apart, on a low eminence, seated on his richly caparisoned mule, was seen

the Papal legate, Campeggio. He raised his hands to bestow his benediction on the brilliant multitude. All knelt down, save the Protestants, whose erect figures made them marked objects in that great assembly, which awaited, with bowed heads, the Papal blessing. The mighty emperor had his first intimation that he should not be able to repeat at Augsburg the proud boast of Caesar, whose successor he affected to be—"I came, I saw, I conquered."

The procession now set forward at a slow pace. "Never," says Seckendorf, "had the grandeur and power of the Empire been illustrated by so magnificent a spectacle."¹ There defiled past the spectator, in long and glittering procession, not only the ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries of Spain and Italy, but representatives of nearly all the nationalities which formed the vast Empire of Charles. First came two companies of lansquenets. Next came the six electors, with the noblemen of their courts, in rich dresses of velvet and silk, and their armed retainers in their red doublets, steel helmets and dancing plumes. There were bishops in violet and cardinals in purple. The ecclesiastics were seated on mules, the princes and counts bestrode prancing coursers. The Elector John of Saxony marched immediately before the emperor, bearing the naked imperial sword, an honour to which his rank in the electoral college entitled him.

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"Last came the prince," says Seckendorf, "on whom all eyes were fixed. Thirty years of age, of distinguished port and pleasing features, robed in golden garments that glittered all over with precious stones, wearing a small Spanish hat on the crown of his head, mounted on a beautiful Polish hackney of the most brilliant whiteness, riding beneath a rich canopy of red white and green damask borne by six senators of Augsburg, and casting around him looks in which gentleness was mingled with gravity, Charles excited the liveliest enthusiasm, and every one exclaimed that he was the handsomest man in the Empire, as well as the mightiest prince in the world."²

His brother, the King of Austria, accompanied Charles. Ferdinand advanced side by side with the Papal legate, their place being immediately behind the emperor.³ They were succeeded by an array of cardinals, bishops, and the ambassadors of foreign

¹Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 24, p. 160.

²Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 24, p. 160.

³Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 127.

Powers, in the insignia of their rank and office. The procession was swollen, moreover, by a miscellaneous throng of much lesser personages—pages, heralds, equerries, trumpeters, drummers, and cross-bearers—whose variegated dresses and flaring colors formed a not unimportant though vulgar item in the magnificence of the cavalcade.⁴ The Imperial Guards and the Augsburg Militia brought up the rear.

It was nine o'clock in the evening when the gates of Augsburg were reached. The thunder of cannon on the ramparts, and the peals of the city bells, informed the people of Augsburg that the emperor was entering their city. The dusk of a summer evening hid somewhat the glory of the procession, but torches were kindled to light it through the streets, and permit the citizens a sight of its grandeur. The accident of the bridge at Bologna was nearly repeated on this occasion. As the cavalcade was advancing to the sound of clarion and kettledrum, six canons, bearing a huge canopy, beneath which they were to conduct the emperor to the cathedral, approached Charles. His horse, startled at the sight, suddenly reared, and nearly threw him headlong upon the street.⁵ He was rescued, however, a second time. At length he entered the minster, which a thousand blazing torches illuminated. After the *Te Deum* came the chanting of prayers, and Charles, putting aside the cushion offered to him, kneeled on the bare floor during the service. The assembly, following the emperor's example, threw themselves on their knees—all save two persons, the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse, who remained standing.⁶ Their behavior did not escape the notice of Duke George and the prelates; but they consoled themselves doubtless by thinking that they would make them bow low enough by-and-by.

When the services in the cathedral were ended, the procession re-formed, and again swept along through the streets of Augsburg. The trumpets sounded, and the bells were tolled. The torches were again lighted to illuminate the night. Their rays glittered on the helmets of the guard, flashed on the faces of the motley crowd of sight-seers, and catching the fronts of the houses, lighted them up

⁴Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 24, p. 161.

⁵Urkunden, 1, 26. D'Aubigne, vol. 4, p. 143.

⁶D'Aubigne, vol. 4, p. 143.

in a gloomy grandeur, and transformed the street through which the procession was advancing into a long, a picturesque, and a most impressive vista of red lights and black shadows. Through a scene of this sort was Charles conducted to the archiepiscopal Palace of the Palatinate, which he entered about ten o'clock.

This assembly, comprising the pride and puissance of the great Spanish monarchy, were here to be the witnesses of the triumph of Rome-so they imagined. The Pope and the emperor had resolved to tolerate the religious schism no longer. Charles, as both Pallavicino and Sarpi testify, came to Augsburg with the firm purpose of putting forth all the power of the Empire in the Diet, in order to make the revolted princes re-enter the obedience of the Roman See. ⁷ The Protestants must bow the head-so have two Puissances decreed. There is a head that is destined to bow down, but it is one that for ten centuries has been lifted up in pride, and has not once during all that time been known to bend-Rome.

The emperor's entry into Augsburg took place on Corpus Christi eve. It was so timed in order that a pretext might be had for the attempts which were to be made for corrupting the Protestants. The program of the imperial and ecclesiastical managers was a short one-wiles; but if these did not prosper they were quite prepared to resort to arms. The Protestant princes were specially invited to take their place in the solemn procession of tomorrow, that of Corpus Christi. It would be hard for the Lutheran chiefs to find an excuse for absence. Even on Lutheran principles it was the literal body of Christ that was to be carried through the streets; surely they would not refuse this token of homage to their Savior, this act of courtesy to their emperor. They declined, however, saying that the body of Christ was in the Sacrament not to be worshipped, but fed on by faith. The legate professed to be highly displeased at their contumacy; ⁸ and even the emperor was not a little chafed. He had nothing for it, however, but to put up with the slight, for attendance on such ceremonies was no part of the duty which they owed him as emperor.

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The next assault was directed against the Protestant sermons. The crowds that gathered round the preachers were as great as ever.

⁷Sarpi, tom. 1, lib. 1 Pallavicino, lib. 3, cap. 3.

⁸Fra Paolo Sarpi, tom. 1, p. 99. Pallavicino, lib. 3, cap. 3, p. 190.

The emperor was galled by the sight of these enthusiastic multitudes, and all the more so that not more than a hundred of the citizens of Augsburg had joined in the grand procession of the day previous, in which he himself had walked bareheaded, carrying a lighted taper.⁹ That the heresy which he had crossed the Alps to extinguish should be proclaimed in a score of churches, and within earshot of him, was more than he could endure. He sent for the Lutheran princes, and charged them to enjoin silence on their preachers. The princes replied that they could not live without the preaching of the Gospel,¹⁰ and that the citizens of Augsburg would not willingly consent to have the churches closed. When Charles insisted that it should be so, the Margrave George exclaimed in animated tones, "Rather than let the Word of God be taken from me, and deny my God, I would kneel down and have my head struck off." And suiting the action to the words, he struck his neck with his hand. "Not the head off," replied Charles, evidently moved by the emotion of the margrave, "dear prince, not the head off." These were the only German words Charles was heard to utter.¹¹ After two days' warm altercation it was concluded on the part of the Protestants- who feared to irritate too greatly the emperor, lest he should forbid the reading of their Confession in the Diet-that during the sitting of the Senate the Protestant sermons should be suspended; and Charles on his part agreed to appoint preachers who should impugn neither creed in their sermons, but steer a middle course between the old and the new faiths. An edict to this effect was next day proclaimed through Augsburg by a herald.¹² The citizens were curious to hear the emperor's preachers. Those who went to witness the promised feat of preaching something that was neither Popery nor Protestantism, were not a little amused by the performances of this new sort of preachers. "Their sermons," said they, "are innocent of theology, but equally innocent of sense."

At length the 20th of June arrived. On this day the Diet was to be opened by a grand procession and a solemn mass. This furnished another pretext for renewing the attempts to corrupt the fidelity, or,

⁹Pallavicino, lib. 3, cap. 3.

¹⁰Corp. Ref., 2, 115.

¹¹Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 25, p. 162.

¹²Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 127. Polano, Hist. Conc. Trent, lib. 1, p. 52.

as the Papists called it, vanquish the obstinacy of the Protestants. The emperor on that day would go in state to mass. It was the right or duty of the Elector of Saxony, as Grand Marshal of the Empire, to carry the sword before Charles on all occasions of state. "Let your majesty," said Campeggio, "order the elector to perform his office."¹³ If John should obey, he would compromise his profession by being present at mass; if he should refuse, he would incur a derogation of dignity, for the emperor would assign the honour to another. The aged elector was in a strait.

He summoned the divines who were present in Augsburg, that he might have their advice. "It is," said they, "in your character of Grand Marshal, and not in your character of Protestant, that you are called to bear the sword before his majesty. You assist at a ceremony of the Empire, and not at a ceremony of religion. You may obey with a safe conscience." And they fortified their opinion by citing the example of Naaman, the prime minister of the King of Damascus, who, though a disciple of Elisha, accompanied his lord when he went to worship in the temple of Baal.¹⁴

The Zwinglian divines did not concur in the opinion expressed by their Lutheran brethren. They called to mind the instance of the primitive Christians who submitted to martyrdom rather than throw a few grains of incense upon the altar. Any one, they said, might be present at any rite of another religion, as if it were a civil ceremony, whenever the fear of loss, or the hope of advantage, tempted one to institute this very dangerous distinction. The advice of the Lutheran divines, however, swayed the elector, and he accordingly took his place in the procession, but remained erect before the altar when the host was elevated.¹⁵

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At this mass Vincenzo Pompinello, Archbishop of Rosano, and nuncio of the Pope, made an oration in Latin before the offertory. Three Romish historians-Pallavicino, Sarpi, and Polano-have handed down to us the substance of his sermon. Beginning with the Turk, the archbishop "upbraided Germany for having so meekly borne so many wrongs at the hands of the barbarian. In this craven spirit had

¹³Fra Paolo Sarpi, tom. 1, p. 99.

¹⁴Pallavicino, lib. 3, cap. 3, p. 191. Fra Paolo Sarpi, tom. 1, pp. 99, 100. Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 27, p. 167.

¹⁵Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 127. Polano, lib. 1, pp. 52, 53. D'Aubigne, Vol. 4, pp. 156, 157.

not acted the great captains of ancient Rome, who had never failed to inflict signal chastisement upon the enemies of the Republic.” At this stage of his address, seized it would seem with a sudden admiration of the Turk, the nuncio set sail on a new tack, and began to extol the Moslem above the German: “The disadvantage of Germany is,” he said, “that the Turk obeys one prince only, whereas in Germany many obey not at all; that the Turks live in one religion, and the Germans every day invent a new religion, and mock at the old, as if it were become moldy. Being desirous to change the faith, they had not found out one more holy and more wise.” He exhorted them that “imitating Scipio, Cato, the people of Rome and their ancestors, they should observe the Catholic religion, forsake these novelties, and give themselves to the war.”¹⁶

His eloquence reached its climax only when he came to speak of the “new religion” which the Germans had invented. “Why,” exclaimed he, “the Senate and people of Rome, though Gentries and the worshippers of false gods, never failed to avenge the insults offered to their rites by fire and sword; but ye, O Germans, who are Christians, and the worshippers of the true and omnipotent God, condemn the rites of holy mother Church by leaving unpunished the great audacity and unheard-of wickedness of enemies. Why do ye rend in pieces the seamless garment of the Savior? why do you abandon the doctrine of Christ, established with the consent of the Fathers, and confirmed by the Holy Ghost, for a devilish belief, which leads to every buffoonery and obscenity?”¹⁷ But the sting of this address was in its tail. “Sharpen thy sword, O magnanimous prince,” said he, turning to the emperor, “and smite these opposers. Peace there never will be in Germany till this heresy shall have been utterly extirpated.” Rising higher still he invoked the Apostles Peter and Paul to lend their powerful aid at this great crisis of the Church.

The zeal of the Papal nuncio, as was to be expected, was at a white heat. The German princes, however, were more cool. This victory with the sword which the orator promised them was not altogether to their mind, especially when they reflected that whereas the archbishop’s share in the enterprise was the easy one of furnishing

¹⁶Polano, lib. 1, p. 53. Fra Paolo Sarpi, tom. 1, p. 100.

¹⁷“Con una diabolica persuasione sbandiscono e traggono ad ogni scherno ed impudicizia.” (Pallavicino, tom. 1, lib. 3, cap. 3, p. 192.)

eloquence for the crusade, to them would remain the more arduous labor of providing arms and money with which to carry it out.

Chapter 22: Luther in the Coburg and Melanchthon at the Diet

The Emperor Opens the Diet-Magnificence of the Assemblage-Hopes of its Members-The Emperor's Speech-His Picture of Europe-The Turk-His Ravages-The Remedy-Charles Calls for Execution of Edict of Worms -Luther at Coburg-His Labours-Translation of the Prophets, etc.-His Health-His Temptations-How he Sustains his Faith-Melanchthon at Augsburg-His Temporisings-Luther's Reproofs and Admonitions

[591] From the cathedral the princes adjourned to the town-hall, where the sittings of the Diet were to take place. The emperor took his seat on a throne covered with cloth of gold. Immediately in front of him sat his brother Ferdinand, King of Austria, On either hand of him were ranged the electors of the Empire. Crowding all round and filling every part of the hall was the rest of this august assembly, including forty-two sovereign princes, the deputies of the cities, bishops, ambassadors-in short, the flower not of Germany only, but of all Christendom. This assemblage- the representative of so much power, rank, and magnificence-had gathered here to deliberate, to lay their plans, and to proclaim their triumphs: so they firmly believed. They were quite mistaken, however. They were here to suffer check after check, to endure chagrin and discomfiture, and to see at last that cause which they had hoped to cast into chains and drag to the stake, escaping from their hands, mounting gloriously upward, and beginning to fill the world with its splendor.

The emperor rose and opened the Diet with a speech. We turn with a feeling of relief from the fiery harangue of the fanatical nuncio to the calm words of Charles. Happily Sleidan has handed down to us the speech of the emperor at considerable length. It contains a sad picture of the Christendom of that age. It shows us the West, groaning under the twin burdens of priestcraft and despotism, ready to succumb to the Turk, and the civilization and liberty of the world

on the point of being overwhelmed by the barbarous arms of the East. It shows us also that this terrible catastrophe would most surely have overtaken the world, if that very Christianity which the emperor was blindly striving to put down had not come at that critical moment, to rekindle the all but extinct fires of patriotism and valor. If Charles had succeeded in extirpating Protestantism, the Turk would have come after him and gathered the spoils. The seat of Empire would have been transferred from Spain to Constantinople, and the dominant religion in the end would have been not Romanism, but Mohammedanism.

The emperor, who did not speak German, made his address be read by the count-palatine. "Sacrificing my private injuries and interests to the common good," said Charles, "I have quitted the most flourishing kingdom of Spain, with great danger, to cross the seas into Italy, and, after making peace with my enemies, to pass thence into Germany. Not only," continued the emperor, "were there great strifes and dissensions in Germany about religion, but also the Turks had invaded Hungary and the neighboring countries, putting all to fire and sword, Belgrad and several other castles and forts being lost. King Lewis and several of the nobles had sent ambassadors to desire the assistance of the Empire... The enemy having taken Rhodes, the bulwark of Christendom on that side, marched further into Hungary, overcame King Lewis in battle, and took, plundered, and burned all the towns and places between the rivers Save and Drave, with the slaughter of many thousands of men. They had afterwards made an incursion into Sclavonia, and there having plundered, burned, and slain, and laid the whole country waste, they had carried away about thirty thousand of men into miserable slavery, and killed those poor creatures that could not follow after with the carriages. They had again, the year before, advanced with an innumerable army into Austria, and laid siege to Vienna, the chief city thereof, having wasted the country far and near, even as far as Linz, where they had practiced all kinds of cruelty and barbarity... That now, though the enemy could not take Vienna,¹ yet the whole country had sustained great damage, which could hardly

¹The Turks had made a breach in the walls of Vienna, and were on the point of entering and taking the city, when a mysterious panic seized them and they fled.

be in long time repaired again. And although the Turk had drawn off his army, yet he had left garrisons and commanders upon the borders to waste and destroy not only Hungary, but Austria also, and Styria, and the places adjoining; and whereas now his territory in many places bordered upon ours, it was not to be doubted but upon the first occasion he would return again with far greater force, and drive on his designs to the utter ruin chiefly of Germany.

It was well known how many places he had taken from us since he was master of Constantinople, how much Christian blood he had shed, and into what straits he had reduced this part of the world, that it ought rather to be lamented and bewailed than enlarged on in discourse. If his fury be not resisted with greater forces than hitherto, we must expect no safety for the future, but one province after another being lost, all at length, and that shortly too, will fall under his power and tyranny. The design of this most cruel enemy was to make slaves of, nay, to sweep off all Christians from the face of the earth.”

The emperor having drawn this picture of the Turk, who every year was projecting a longer shadow over Christendom, proceeded next to counsel his hearers to trample out that spirit which alone was capable of coping with this enemy, by commanding them to execute the Edict of Worms.²

[592] While the Diet is proceeding to business, let us return to Luther, whom we left, as our readers will recollect, in the Castle of Coburg. Alone in his solitary chamber, he is, rightly looked at, a grander sight than the magnificent assemblage we have been contemplating. He is the embodiment of that great power which Charles has assembled his princes and is about to muster his armies to combat, but before which he is destined to fall, and with him that mighty Empire over which he so proudly sways the scepter, and which, nine years before, at the Diet of Worms, he had publicly staked on the issue.

Luther is again shut up with his thoughts and his books. From the scene of labor and excitement which Wittemberg had become, how refreshing and fascinating the solitude of the Coburg! The day was his own, with scarce an interruption, from dawn till dusk. The Reformer needed rest, and all things around him seemed to invite

²Sleidan, bk. 7, pp. 127-129.

him to it-the far-extending plains, the quiet woods, the cawing of the rooks, and the song of the birds; but Luther was incapable of resting. Scarcely had the tramp of the elector's horsemen, continuing their journey to Augsburg, died away in the distance, than he sat down, and wrote to Wittemberg for his books. By the end of April they had arrived, and he immediately set to work. He returned to his version of Jeremiah, and completed it before the end of June. He then resumed the Minor Prophets, and before the middle of August all had been translated, with the exception of Haggai and Malachi. He wrote an exposition of several of the Psalms-the 2nd, the 113th, and 117th-a discourse on the necessity of schools for children, and various tracts-one on purgatory, another on the power of the "keys," and a third on the intercession of saints. With untiring labor he forged bolt after bolt, and from his retreat discharged them at the enemy.

But the too active spirit wore out the body. Luther was seized with vertigo. The plains, with their woods and meadows, seemed to revolve around the Castle of Coburg; his ears were stunned with great noises; at times it was as if a thunder-peal were resounding in his head. Then, perforce, the pen was laid down. But again he would snatch it up, and give Philip the benefit of his dear-bought experience, and bid him "take care of his own precious little body, and not commit homicide." "God," he said, "is served by rest, by nothing more than rest, and therefore He has willed that the Sabbath should be so rigidly kept"-thus anticipating Milton's beautiful lines

"God doth not need Either man's work, or His own gifts; who best Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed, And post o'er land and ocean without rest.

They also serve who only stand and wait."³

But worse symptoms supervened. In the unstrung condition of his nervous system, impressions became realities to him. His imagination clothed the dangers which he apprehended in a palpable form and shape, and they stood before him as visible existences. His Old Enemy of the Wartburg comes sailing, like black night, to the Castle of Coburg. The Reformer, however, was not to be overcome,

³Sonnets, No. 19:(on his blindness).

though the Prince of Darkness had brought all hell behind him. He wrote texts of Scripture upon the walls of his apartment, upon his door, upon his bed—"I will lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou, O Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." Within this "fortress" he felt he could defy the Prince of Spain and the Prince of the Power of the Air.

Three hours of every day did Luther devote to prayer; to this he added the assiduous perusal of the Scriptures.⁴ These were the fountains at which he refreshed his soul, and whence he recruited his strength. Nay, more, the intercessions that ascended from the Coburg came back, we cannot doubt, upon his friends in Augsburg in needed supplies of wisdom and courage, and thus were they able to maintain the battle in the presence of their numerous and powerful adversaries. For days together Luther would be left without intelligence from the Diet. Post after post arrived from Augsburg. "Do you bring me letters?" he would eagerly inquire. "No," was the answer, with a uniformity that severely tried his patience, and also his temper. At times he became a prey to fear-not for himself; his life he held in his hand, ready at any moment to lay it down for the truth; it was for his friends he feared in these intervals of silence, lest perchance some disaster had befallen them. Retiring into his closet, he would again send up his cry to the throne in the heavens. Straightway the clouds of melancholy would roll away, and the light of coming triumphs would break in upon his soul. He would go to the window and look forth upon the midnight sky. The mighty vault, studded with glorious stars, became to him a sign that helped his faith. "How magnificent! how lofty!" he would exclaim. "Where are the strong pillars that support this immense dome? I nowhere behold them. Yet the heavens do not fall." Thus the firmament, upheld by a Hand he could not see, preached to him peace and prophesied of triumph. It said to him, "Why, Luther, are you disquieted and in trouble? Be at rest." He saw around him a work in progress as stupendous as the fabric of the heavens. But why should he take that work upon himself as if it were his, and as if he must charge himself with its standing or its falling? As well might he take upon his shoulder the burden of the firmament. The heavens did not fall although his hand

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⁴Corp. Ref., 2, 159.

was not steadying its pillars, and this work would go on whether he lived or died. He saw the Pope and the emperor and the Prince of Hell fighting against it with all their might; nevertheless, it was borne up and carried forward. It was not he that was causing it to advance, nor was it Melanchthon, nor the Elector John; agencies so feeble were wholly inadequate to effects so grand. There was an omnipotent Hand guiding this movement, although to him it was invisible; and if that Hand was there, was his weak arm needed? and if it should be withdrawn, was it Luther's that could uphold it? In that Hand, the Hand of the God-man, of Him who made and who upholds the world, would he leave this cause. If it should fall, it was not Luther that would fall, but the Monarch of heaven and earth; and he would rather fall with Christ than stand with Charles. Such was the train of courageous thoughts that would awaken in the mind of Luther. In this way did he strengthen his faith, and being strengthened himself he strengthened his brethren.

Nor were the counsels and encouragements of Luther unneeded at Augsburg. Melanchthon, constitutionally timid, with a mind to penetrate rather than to dare, a soul to expatiate on the beauty of truth rather than to delight in the rude gusts and tempests of opposition, at all times bending under apprehensions, was at this time bowed down to almost the very ground. In fact, he was trying to uphold the heavens. Instead of leaving the cause in the hands of Him whose it was, as Luther did, he was taking it upon his own shoulder, and he felt its weight crushing him. He was therefore full of thoughts, expedients, and devices. Every day he had some new explanation, some subtle gloss, or some doubtful compromise which he thought would gain the Catholics. He kept running about continually, being now closeted with this bishop, now with that; now dancing attendance on the legate, and now on the emperor.⁵ Melanchthon never had the same clear and perfect conviction as Luther that there were two diametrically opposite Churches and faiths in the matter he was handling, and that he was but wasting time and risking character, and, what was infinitely more, truth, in these attempts to reconcile the two. He had no fruit of these efforts, save the consuming anxiety which they caused him now, and the

⁵Zwingl., Epp., 2, 473. D'Aubigne. vol 4, p. 165.

bitter mortification which their failure gave him afterwards. "I dwell in perpetual tears,"⁶ wrote he to Luther. In reply Luther points out, with admirable fidelity and skill, at once the malady and its cure. The cure is expressed in one word—Faith.

"Grace and peace in Christ! in Christ, I say, and not in the world. Amen. I hate with exceeding hatred those extreme cares which consume you. If the cause is unjust, abandon it; if the cause is just, why should we belie the promises of Him Who commands us to sleep without fear? Can the devil do more than kill us? Christ will not be wanting to the work of justice and of truth. He lives; He reigns: what fear then can we have? God is powerful to upraise His cause if it is overthrown, to make it proceed if it remains motionless; and, if we are not worthy of it, He will do it by others.

"I have received your Apology,⁷ and I cannot understand what you mean when you ask what we must concede to the Papist. We have already conceded too much. Night and day I meditate on this affair, turning it over and over, diligently searching the Scriptures, and the conviction of the truth of our doctrine becomes every day stronger in my mind. With the help of God, I will not permit a single letter of all that we have said to be torn from us.

"The issue of this affair torments you, because you cannot understand it. But if you could, I would not have the least share in it. God has put it in a 'common-place' that you will not find in either your rhetoric or your philosophy. That place is called Faith. It is that in which subsist all things that we can neither understand nor see. Whoever wishes to touch them, as you do, will have tears for his sole reward.

"If Christ is not with us, where is He in the whole universe? If we are not the Church, where, I pray, is the Church? Is it the Duke of Bavaria? is it Ferdinand? is it the Pope? is it the Turk who is the Church? If we have not the Word of God, who is it that possesses it?

"Only we must have faith, lest the cause of faith should be found to be without faith.

⁶Corp. Ref., 2, 140.

⁷The Confession, afterwards read in the Diet.

“If we fall, Christ falls with us—that is to say, the Master of the world. I would rather fall with Christ than remain standing with Caesar.”⁸

⁸Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 32, p. 182.

Chapter 23: Reading of the Augsburg Confession

The Religious Question First-Augsburg Confession-Signed by the Princes-The Laity-Princes Demand to Read their Confession in Public Diet-Refusal-Demand Renewed-Granted-The Princes Appear before the Emperor and Diet-A Little One become a Thousand- Mortification of Charles-Confession Read in German-Its Articles—The Trinity-Original Sin-Christ- Justification- The Ministry- Good Works -The Church-The Lord’s Supper, etc.-The Mass, etc—Effect of Reading the Confession-Luther’s Triumph

Picture: The Protestant Princes Signing their Confession

Picture: The Protestant Princes Presenting their Confession to Charles

The diet was summoned for two causes-first, the defense of Christendom against the Turk; secondly, and mainly, the settlement of the religious question. It was resolved to take into consideration first the matter of religion.

In order to an intelligent decision on this question, it seemed equitable, and indeed indispensable, that the Diet should hear from the Protestants a statement of the doctrine which they held. Without this, how could the Diet either approve or condemn? Such a manifesto, based on the “Torgau Articles,” had been drawn up by Melancthon, approved by Luther, and was now ready to be presented to the Diet, provided the emperor would consent to the public reading of it.

On the morning of the 23rd of June, the Protestants met in the apartments of the Elector of Saxony to append their signatures to this important deed. It was first read in German. The Elector John took the pen, and was about to append his name, when Melancthon interposed. “It was the ministers of the Word, and not the princes of the State,” he said, “that ought to appear in this matter. This was the voice of the Church.” “God forbid,” replied the elector, “that you should exclude me from confessing my Lord. My electoral hat and my ermine are not so precious to me as the cross of Jesus Christ.”

On this Melancthon suffered him to proceed, and John, Duke of Saxony, was the first whose name was appended to this document.

After the Elector of Saxony had subscribed, George, Margrave of Brandenburg, and Ernest, Duke of Luneburg, appended their signatures, and then the pen was handed to Philip of Hesse. The landgrave accompanied his signature with an intimation that he dissented from the article on the Lord's Supper. He stood with Zwingle in this matter. ¹ Then followed John Frederick, son of the Elector of Saxony; and Francis, Duke of Luneburg. Wolfgang, Prince of Anhalt, came last.

"I would rather renounce my subjects and my States," said he, when he took the pen to sign, "I would rather quit the country of my fathers staff in hand, than receive any other doctrine than that which is contained in this Confession." ² The devotion of the princes inspired the theologians.

Of the cities only two as yet subscribed the Confession, Nuremberg and Reutlingen. Those we have mentioned were the nine original subscribers. The document received a number of signatures afterwards; princes, ecclesiastics, and cities pressed forward to append their names to it. The ministers, one may think, ought to have had precedence in the matter of subscription. But the only names which the deed bore when carried to the Diet were those of the seven princes and the two cities, all lay signatures. One great end, however, was gained thereby: it gave grand prominence to a truth which for ages had been totally lost sight of, and purposely as profoundly buried. It proclaimed the forgotten fact that the laity form part of the Church. Rome practically defined the Church to be the priesthood. This was not a body Catholic, it was a caste, a third party, which stood between God and the laity, to conduct all transactions between the two. But when the Church revives at this great era, she is seen to be not a mutilated body, a mere fragment; she stands up a perfect, a complete society.

The Protestants agreed to demand that their Confession should be read publicly in the Diet. This was a vital point with them. They

¹Corp. Ref. 2, 155.

²We have taken the names and order of the subscribers to this memorable deed from the Augustana Confessio, printed at Leipsic and Jena (1705), and carefully edited by Philip Mullero, from the first printed copy at Leipsic, 1580.

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had not kindled this light to put it under a bushel, but to set it in a very conspicuous place; indeed, in the midst even of the princedoms, hierarchies, and powers of Christendom now assembled at Augsburg. To this, however, obstacles were interposed, as it was foreseen there would be. The Confession was subscribed on the 23rd of June; it was to be presented on the 24th. On that day the Diet met at three o'clock of the afternoon. The Protestant princes appeared and demanded leave to read their Confession. The legate Campeggio rose and began to speak. He painted the bark of Peter struggling in a tempestuous sea, the great billows breaking over it, and ready every moment to engulf it; but it was his consolation to know that a strong arm was near, able to still these mighty waves, and rescue that imperilled bark from destruction.³ The strong arm to which he referred was that of the emperor. He ran on a long while in this vein of rhetoric. The legate was speaking against time. Next came deputies from Austria, who had a long and doleful recital of the miseries the Turk had inflicted upon them to lay before the Diet.⁴ This scene had all been arranged beforehand.

It came at length to an end. The Protestant princes rose again and craved permission to read their paper. "It is too late," was the emperor's reply. "But," insisted the princes, "we have been publicly accused, and we must be permitted publicly to justify ourselves." "Then," said the emperor, who felt it would be well to make a show of yielding, "tomorrow at the Palatinate Chapel." The "Palatinate Chapel" was not the usual place of the Diet's meeting, but an apartment in the emperor's own palace, capable of containing about two hundred persons.⁵ It was seen that the emperor wished the audience to be select.

The morrow came, the 25th of June, 1530. Long before the hour of the Diet a great crowd was seen besieging the doors of the Palatinate. At three o'clock the emperor took his seat on his throne. Around him was gathered all that his vast Empire could furnish of kingly power, princely dignity, august station, brilliant title, and gorgeous munificence. There was one lofty head missing, one seat

³Seckendorf, lib. 2, p. 169.

⁴Corp. Ref., 2, 154.

⁵Fra Paolo Sarpi, tom. 1, lib. 1, p. 101. Polano, lib. 1," p. 54.

vacant in that brilliant assembly. Campeggio stayed away,⁶ and his absence anticipated a decree afterwards passed in a consistory of the cardinals at Rome disapproving the Diet's entering on the religious question, seeing that was a matter the decision of which appertained exclusively to the Pope. The eventful moment was now come. The princes stood up at the foot of the emperor's throne to present their Confession—John of Saxony, John Frederick, his son, Philip of Hesse, George of Brandenburg, Wolfgang of Anhalt, Ernest and Francis of Luneburg, and the two deputies of Nuremberg and Reutlingen. All eyes were fixed upon them. "Their air was animated," says Scultet, "and their faces radiant with joy."⁷ It was impossible but that the scene of nine years ago should forcibly present itself at this moment to the emperor's mind. Then, as now, he sat upon his throne with the princes of his kingdom around him, and a solitary monk stood up in his presence to confess his faith. The astounding scene was reproducing itself. The monk again stands up to confess his faith; not, indeed, in his own person, but in that of confederate princes and cities, inspired with his spirit and filled with his power. Here was a greater victory than any the emperor had won, and he had gained not a few since the day of Worms. Charles, ruler of two worlds, could not but feel that the monk was a greater sovereign than himself. Was not this the man and the cause against which he had fulminated his ban? Had he not hoped that, long ere this day, both would have sunk out of sight, crushed under its weight? Had he not summoned Diet after Diet to deal this cause the finishing blow? How, then, did it happen that each new Diet gave it a new triumph? Whence did it derive that mysterious and wondrous life, which the more it was oppressed the more it grew? It embittered his state to see this "Mordecai" sitting at the gate of his power, and refusing to do obeisance; nor could he banish from his mind the vaticinations which "his wise men, and Zeresh his wife," addressed to an ambitious statesman of old: "If thou hast begun to fall before him, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him."

⁶Fra Paolo Sarpi, tom. 1, p. 102.

⁷Scultet, tom. 1, p.273

The two chancellors of the elector, Bruck and Bayer, rose, holding in their hand, the one a German and the other a Latin copy of the "Chief Articles of the Faith." "Read the Latin copy," suggested the emperor. "No," replied the Elector of Saxony respectfully, "we are Germans and on German soil, we crave to speak in German."⁸ Bayer now began to read, and he did so in a voice so clear and strong that every word was audible to the vast crowd of eager listeners that filled the ante-chambers of the hall.

[596] "Most invincible Emperor, Caesar Augustus, most gracious lord," so spoke the chancellor, "we are here in obedience to the summons of your Majesty, ready to deliberate and confer on the affairs of religion, in order that, arriving at one sincere and true faith, we may fight under one Christ, form one Christian Church, and live in one unity and concord." As their contribution to this great work of 940 pacification, the Protestants went on to say, through Bayer, that they had prepared and brought with them to the Diet a summary of the doctrines which they held, agreeable to Holy Scripture, and such as had aforetime been professed in their land, and taught in their Church. But should, unhappily, the conciliation and concord which they sought not be attained, they were ready to explain their cause in a "free, general Christian Council."⁹ The reading of the Confession proceeded in deep silence.

Article I. confessed the TRINITY. "There is one Divine essence who is God, eternal, incorporeal, indivisible, infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness; and there are three persons of the same essence and power and co-eternity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

Article II. confessed ORIGINAL SIN. "Since the fall of Adam all men descending from him by ordinary generation are born in sin, which places under condemnation and bringeth eternal death to all who are not born again by baptism and the Holy Ghost."

Article III. confessed the person and office of Christ. "The Son of God assumed humanity and has thus two natures, the divine and human, in His one person, inseparably conjoined: one Christ, very God and very man. He was born of the Virgin, He truly suffered, was crucified, died and was buried, that He might reconcile us to the

⁸Seckendorf, lib. 2, p.170

⁹Augustana Confessio-Praefatio ad Caesarem; Lipsiae et Jenae, 1705.

Father, and be the sacrifice, not only for the original sin, but also for all the actual transgressions of men.”

Article IV. confessed the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION. “Men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. They are justified freely on Christ’s account through faith, when they believe in the free pardon of their sins for the sake of Christ, Who has made satisfaction for them by His death. This faith God imputes to them for righteousness.”

The “antithesis” or condemnation of the opposite doctrines professed by the Arians, Pelagians, Anabaptists, and more ancient heretical sects, was not stated under this article, as under the previous ones. We see in this omission the prudence of Melancthon.

941 Article V. confessed the institution of the MINISTRY. “For by the preaching of the Word, and the dispensation of the Sacraments, the Holy Spirit is pleased to work faith in the heart.”

Article VI. confessed GOOD WORKS. “Faith ought to bear good fruits, not that these may justify us before God, but that they may manifest our love to God.”

Article VII. confessed the CHURCH, “which is the congregation of the holy, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered. To the real unity of the Church it is sufficient that men agree in the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments; nor is it necessary that the rites and ceremonies instituted by men should be everywhere the same.”

Article VIII. confessed the CHURCH VISIBLE. “Although the Church is properly the assembly of saints and true believers, yet in this life there are mixed up in it many hypocrites and manifest sinners.” ¹⁰

Article IX. set forth the necessity of BAPTISM to salvation, “for through baptism is offered the grace of God,” and the lawfulness of infant baptism.

Article X. set forth the doctrine of the LORD’S SUPPER. “We teach that the body and blood of Christ are really present, and administered to those who partake of the Lord’s Supper.” ¹¹

¹⁰“*Quanquam ecclesia*” etc. “*cum in hac vita multi hypocritae et mali admixti sunt.*” (Augustana Confessio.)

¹¹“*De Coena Domini docent, quod corpus Christi vere adsint, et distribuuntur vescentibus in Coena Domini.*” (Ibid.)

Articles XI. and XII. stated the doctrine of the Lutheran confessors on confession and penance.

Article XIII. set forth more explicitly the nature and use of the Sacraments, affirming that they were not mere “notes of profession” among men, but “signs and testimonies of the good-will of God toward us;” and that therefore to the “use of the Sacrament” faith must be added, which takes hold of the promises exhibited and held forth by the sacrament. And in the antithesis to this article they condemned those who taught that the Sacrament accomplishes its end *ex opere operato*, and that faith is not required in order to the remission of sins.

[597] The articles that follow to the end are occupied with church order and rites, civil government, the final judgment, free will, and good works. On the latter the framers of the Confession were careful to distinguish between the power which man has to do “good or evil,” within the sphere of natural and civil justice, and the sphere of holiness. Man can do many things, they said. He can love his children, his neighbors, his country; he can study an art, practice a profession, or guide the State; he can bless society by his virtues and talents, or afflict it by his vices and crimes; but those actions only are righteous in the sight of God which spring from a gracious principle, implanted by the Holy Spirit, and which are directed to a heavenly end. To love God, and love and labor for man for God’s sake, is a power, they taught, which fallen man does not possess, and which must be given him from above; according to the saying of Ambrose, that “Faith is the mother of good desires and holy actions”-words which are but the echo of those of a greater Teacher, “Without me ye can do nothing.”¹²

In conclusion, the Protestants returned in their Confession to their grand cardinal doctrine, salvation by grace. They especially attacked the mass, on which Rome had suspended the salvation of the world, making the priest, and not Christ, the savior of men; the sacrifice on the altar, and not the sacrifice on the cross, the real propitiation; thus compelling men to come to her and not to God for pardon, making merchandise of heaven, changing worship into mountebankery, and the Church into a fair. “If the mass,” said they,

¹²Augustana Confessio, art. 20, De Bonis Operibus.

“takes away the sins of the living and the dead, *ex opere operato*, then justification hangs on a mere rite,” and Christ died in vain.¹³ With the Bible they would know no sacrifice for sin but that made by Christ, once for all, on Calvary, everlasting, and never needing to be repeated, inasmuch as its efficacy is wide as the populations of the globe, and lasting as eternity. Nor would they put any conditions upon the enjoyment of these merits other than had been put upon them by Him whose they were. These merits they would not give as the wages of work, nor as the equivalent of gold; they would give them on the same terms on which the Gospel offered them, “without money and without price.” Thus they labored to overthrow the mass, with that whole system of salvation by works of which it was the pre-eminent symbol, and to restore the cross.

We have said that under the Fourth Article, that relating to justification, the antithesis was not formally stated. The Confession did not say, “We condemn Papists, etc., who hold a doctrine opposed to justification by faith.” This omission arose from no want of courage, for in what follows we find the errors of Romanism boldly attacked. The mass, as we have seen, was not spared; but the Protestants did not single out the mass alone. There was scarcely an abuse or error of the system that was not passed in review, and dismissed with the brand of reprobation upon it. On one and all was the sentence pronounced, “Unknown to Scripture and to the Fathers.” Priestly absolution, distinction of meats, monastic vows, feast-days, the pernicious mixing up of ecclesiastical and civil authority, so hurtful to the character of the ministers of the Word, and so prolific of wars and bloodshed to the world—all were condemned on many grounds, but on this above all others, that they “obscured the doctrine of grace, and of the righteousness of faith, which is the cardinal article, the crowning glory of the Gospel.”¹⁴

The Confession—with conspicuous boldness, when we think that it was read before an assembly in which so many prince-bishops had a seat—condemned one of the grand errors of the Middle Ages, namely, the confusion of Church and State, and the blending of

¹³Si missa tollit peccata vivorum et mortuorum ex opere operato contingit justificatio ex opere Missarum, non ex fide.” (Augustaria Confessio, art. 24, De Missa.)

¹⁴Primo obscurata est doctrina de gratia et justitia fidei, quae est praecipua pars evangelii.” (Augustana Confessio, art. 26.)

things spiritual and secular, which had led to such corruption in the Church and inflicted so many calamities upon the world. It explained, with great clearness and at considerable length, that Church and State are two distinct societies, and, although co-related, each has its own boundaries, its own rights and duties, and that the welfare of both requires the maintenance of the independence of each.

“Many,” Bayer continued, “have unskilfully confounded the episcopal and the temporal power; and from this confusion have resulted great wars, revolts, and seditions. It is for this reason, and to reassure men’s consciences, that we find ourselves constrained to establish the difference which exists between the power of the Church and the power of the sword.

“We, therefore, teach that the power of the keys or of the bishops is, conformably with the Word of the Lord, a commandment emanating from God, to preach the Gospel, to remit or retain sins, and to administer the Sacraments. This power has reference only to eternal goods, is exercised only by the minister of the Word, and does not trouble itself with political administration. The political administration, on the other hand, is busied with everything else but the Gospel. The magistrate protects, not souls, but bodies and temporal possessions. He defends them against all attacks from without, and by making use of the sword and of punishment, compels men to observe civil justice and peace.

[598] “For this reason we must take particular care not to mingle the power of the Church with the power of the State. The power of the Church ought never to invade an office that is foreign to it; for Christ Himself said: ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’ And again: ‘Who made me a judge over you?’ St. Paul said to the Philippians: ‘Our citizenship is in heaven.’ And to the Corinthians: ‘The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God.’

“It is thus that we distinguish the two governments and the two powers, and that we honour both as the most excellent gifts that God has given us here on earth.

“The duty of the bishops is therefore to preach the Gospel, to forgive sins, and to exclude from the Christian Church all who rebel against the Lord, but without human power, and solely by the Word of God. If the bishops act thus, the Churches ought to be obedient

to them, according to this declaration of Christ: ‘Whoever heareth you heareth Me.’

“But if the bishops teach anything that is contrary to the Gospel, then the Churches have an order from God which forbids them to obey ([Matthew 7:15](#), [Galatians 1](#), and [2 Corinthians 13:8, 10](#)). And St. Augustine himself, in his letter against Pertilian, writes: “We must not obey the Catholic bishops, if they go astray, and teach anything contrary to the canonical Scriptures of God.”” Bayer then came to the epilogue of the Confession.

“It is not from hatred that we have spoken,” said he, “nor to insult any one, but we have explained the doctrines that we maintain to be essential, in order that it may be understood that we admit of neither dogma nor ceremony which is contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and to the usage of the Universal Church.”

“Such,” said Bayer, having finished the document, “is a summary of our faith. Other things might have been stated, but for brevity’s sake they are omitted. But what has been said is sufficient to show that in our doctrines and ceremonies nothing has been admitted which is inconsistent with Scripture, or with the Church catholic.”¹⁵

The reading of the Confession occupied two hours. Not a word was spoken all that time. This assembly of princes and warriors, statesmen and ecclesiastics, sat silent, held fast in the spell, not of novelty merely, but of the simplicity, beauty, and majesty of the truths which passed before them in the grand spiritual panorama which Melanchthon’s powerful hand had summoned up. Till now they had known the opinions of the Protestants only as rumor had exaggerated, or ignorance obscured, or hatred misrepresented and vilified them: now they learned them from the pen of the clearest intellect and most accomplished scholar in the Lutheran host. Melanchthon, knowing that he had to speak to an audience that were dull of ear, and yet more dull of heart, had put forth all his powers to throw the charm of an elegant style and lucid illustration around his theological theses; and such was his success that he was alike intelligible to layman and ecclesiastic, to warrior, baron, and scholar in the Diet. But this was the least of Melanchthon’s triumphs.

¹⁵Augustana Confessio-Epilogus.

In the two hours which the reading of the Confession occupied, what a work had been accomplished, what an advance made in the great cause of the Reformation! The errors which had been growing up during the course of ages had sentence of doom pronounced upon them, and from that hour began to wither away; such was the clearness and pertinency of the proofs with which Melancthon confirmed the Protestant doctrines. It was as when the morning dawns, and the clouds which all night long had rested on the sides of the Alps break up, and rolling away disclose the stupendous, snow-clad, glorious peaks: so now, the fogs of mediaevalism begin to scatter, and lo! in majestic and brilliant array, those eternal verities which the Holy Spirit had revealed in ancient times for the salvation of men—those Alps of the spiritual world, those mountain-peaks that lift their heads into heaven, bathed with the light of the throne of God—are seen coming forth, and revealing themselves to man's ravished eye. The Confession, moreover, added not a few influential converts to the ranks of Protestantism. The effect on some was surprise; on others, conviction; on most, it was the creation of a more conciliatory spirit towards the Lutherans.

Thirteen years before (1517) a solitary monk, bearing a scroll in one hand and a hammer in the other, is seen forcing his way through a crowd of pilgrims, and nailing his scroll, with its ninety-five theses, to the door of the castle-church of Wittemberg. The scene repeats itself, but on a grander scale. Now a phalanx of princes and free cities is beheld pressing through the throng of the Diet of Augsburg, and, in presence of the assembled princedoms and hierarchies of Christendom, it nails the old scroll—for what is the Confession of Augsburg but the monk's scroll enlarged, and more impregably supported by proof?—it nails this scroll to the throne of Charles V.

Chapter 24: After the Diet of Augsburg

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The Great Protest-The Cities asked to Abandon it-The Augsburg Confession-Theological Culmination of Reformation in Germany- Elation of the Protestants-Three Confessions-Harmony-New Converts-Consultations and Dialogues in the Emperor's Antechamber-The Bishop of Salzburg on Priests-Translation of the Confession into French-The Free Protesting Towns-Asked to Abandon the Protest of 1529-Astonishment of the Deputies-The Vanquished affecting to be the Victor-What the Protest of 1529 enfolded-The Folly of the Emperor's Demand

Picture: View in Strasburg

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We are now arrived at a stage where we can look around and take a survey of this great movement of regeneration as it develops itself in other countries. Everywhere, on the right and on the left, from the Baltic to the Alps, and from the Atlantic to the gates of Vienna, the doctrines of Protestantism are being scattered and are taking vigorous root. Nay, even beyond the mountains that wall in Italy and Spain, Protestant movements are springing up, and Rome is beginning to be assailed in those countries where she deemed her power to be so deeply seated in the traditional beliefs, the blind devotion, and the pleasure-loving habits of the people, that no one would be mad enough to attack her. But before withdrawing our eyes from Germany, let us briefly note the events immediately consequent on the Confession of Augsburg.

The presentation of the Confession to the Diet ¹ was the culmination of the movement on German soil. It was the

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¹You may see in the bishop's palace the chamber where the famous Confession of Augsburg was presented to the Emperor Charles V. From thence we went to the cathedral, where there is a gate of brass, over which many places of the sacred history are represented in basso relievo, and they made us observe in the history of the creation that it was the Virgin Mary who created Eve, and formed her out of one of Adam's ribs." (Misson, vol. 1, p. 135.)

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proudest hour of the Lutheran Church. To this point the labours of Luther and of the forces that operated around him had tended, and now that it was reached, the crown was put upon the theological development. The Augsburg Confession was not a perfectly accurate statement of Scripture truth by any means, but as a first attempt, made before the Reformation had completed its second decade, it was a marvellous effort, and has not been cast into the shade by even the noblest of those Confessions which have since followed it, and for which it so largely helped to prepare the way. When this Confession was laid on the imperial table, the movement had no longer Luther as its sole or chief embodiment. The Reformation now stood before the world in a body of Articles, drawn from the Bible, and comprehensively embracing those principles which God has made known as a basis of justice and order to nations, and the means of renewal and eternal life to individuals; and whatever might become of Luther, though he were this moment to be offered as a martyr, or, which was possible but hardly conceivable, were to apostatise, and destroy the faith he once preached, here was a greater preacher of the truth, standing before the nations, and keeping open to them the road to a glorious future.

Was the Confession of Augsburg to come in the room of the Bible to the Protestants? Far from it. Let us not mistake the end for which it was framed, and the place it was intended to occupy. The Confession did not create the faith; it simply confessed it. The doctrines it contained were in the Confession because they were first of all in the Bible. A terrestrial chart has authority and is to be followed only when for every island and continent marked on it there is a corresponding island and continent on the surface of the globe; a manual of botany has authority only when for every term on its page there is a living flower or tree in the actual landscape; and a map of the heavens is true only when for every star named in it there is an actual star shining in the sky. So of the Augsburg Confession, and all Confessions, they are true, and of authority, and safe guides only when every statement they contain has its corresponding doctrine in the Scriptures. Their authority is not in themselves, but in the Word of God. Therefore they do not fetter conscience, or tyrannise over it, except when perverted; they but guard its liberty, by shielding

the understanding from the usurpation of error, and leaving the conscience free to follow the light of the Word of God.

Both parties felt the vast consequences that must needs follow from what had just taken place. The Protestants were elated. They had carried their main object, which was nothing less than to have their faith published in presence of the Diet, and so of all Christendom. “By the grace of God,” exclaimed Pontanus, as he handed the Latin copy to the emperor’s secretary, “this Confession shall prevail in spite of the gates of hell.”

“Christ has been boldly confessed at Augsburg,” said Luther, when the news reached him. “I am overjoyed that I have lived to this hour.” The Churches, as we have seen, had been closed against the Protestant ministers; but now we behold the pulpit set up in the Diet itself, and great princes becoming preachers of the Gospel.

The Popish members were dismayed and confounded when they reflected on what had been done. The Diet had been summoned to overthrow the Reformation; instead of this it had established it. In the wake of this Confession came other two, the one written by Bucer, and signed by four cities which in the matter of the Lord’s Supper leaned to the Zwinglian rather than to the Lutheran view—Strasbourg, Constance, Memmingen, and Lindau;² hence its name, the Tetrapolitan Confession; and the other presented in the name of Zwingle, and containing a statement of his individual views. Thus the movement, instead of shrinking into narrower dimensions, or hiding itself from view, was coming boldly out in the presence of its opponents, and the feeble hope which the Romanists founded upon the circumstance that there were three representations, or “a schism in the schism,” as they termed it, vanished when these several documents were examined, and it was seen that there was substantial agreement among them; that on one point only did they differ,³ and that all were united in their repudiation and condemnation of Rome.

Moreover, powerful princes were passing from the Romanist to the Protestant side. The Archbishop Hermann, Elector of Cologne, the Count Palatine Frederick, Duke Eric of Brunswick-Luneburg, Duke Henry of Mecklenburg, and the Dukes of Pomerania were

²Corp. Ref., p. 187. Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 130.

³Fra Paolo Sarpi, tom. 1, lib. 1, p. 102.

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gained to the truth, and their accession wellnigh doubled the political strength of the Reformation. These trophies of the power of the Confession were viewed as pledges of more numerous conversions to be effected in time to come. Nor were these hopes disappointed. The Confession was translated into most of the languages of Europe, and circulated in the various countries; the misrepresentations and calumnies which had obscured and distorted the cause were cleared away; and Protestantism began to be hailed as a movement bringing with it renovation to the soul and new life to States.

It was the morning of the day following that on which the Confession had been read, the 26th of June. The emperor had just awoke. He had slept badly, and was wearied and irritable. The affair of yesterday recurred to his mind, and a feeling of melancholy began to weigh upon him. He had made a bad beginning of the enterprise arranged between himself and the Pope at Bologna. Lutheranism stood better in the eyes of the world, and had more adherents around it now than when he entered Augsburg. He must bethink him how he can correct his first false move. At that moment the count palatine, looking as much out of sorts as his master, entered the imperial apartment. His eye caught the anxious face of the emperor, and divining the cause of his uneasiness, "We must," said he, "yield something to the Lutheran princes." A feeling of relief to the mind of Charles accompanied these words; and the count went on to say that it might not be ungraceful to make the concessions which the Emperor Maximilian was willing to grant. "What were they?" inquired the monarch. "These three: communion in both kinds, the marriage of priests, and freedom with regard to fasts," rejoined the count palatine. The thing pleased Charles. It left untouched the mass and the authority of the Church. It was a small sacrifice to prevent a great evil.

In a little, while Granvelle and Campeggio arrived. They were told the counsel which the count palatine had given, and which seemed good in the eyes of the emperor. It was not equally good in the eyes of these Churchmen. At the conferences at Bologna, Campeggio, as we have seen, had only one course to recommend, one remedy for all the heresies of the day—the sword. He was of the same opinion at Augsburg as at Bologna. Concession would only lead to greater concessions. "The counsel of the count palatine was

not good,” said the cardinal, and Campeggio had the art to persuade Charles to reject it.

Other arrivals soon followed, mainly ecclesiastics, who reinforced the legate in the position he had taken up. “I stay with the mother,” exclaimed the Bishop of Wurzburg. “Spoken like a true and obedient son,” said the courtier Brentz; “but pray, my lord, do not, for the mother, forget either the father or the son.” “It is not the cure, but the physician who prescribes it, that I dislike,” said the Archbishop of Salzburg, who had been peculiarly bitter against the Reformers. “I would oblige the laity with the cup, and the priests with wives, and all with a little more liberty as regards meats, nor am I opposed to some reformation of the mass; but that it should be a monk, a poor Augustine, who presumes to reform us all, is what I cannot get over.”⁴ “Nor I,” responded another bishop, “that a little town should teach all the world; and that the ancient and orthodox waters of Rome should be forsaken for the heretical and paltry stream that Wittemberg sends forth, is not to be thought of.” It was the old objection, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

Of the men now assembling around Charles, some blamed themselves as well as the Lutherans. The Bishop of Salzburg, whom we have just mentioned as more than ordinarily hostile to the Reformation, was by no means blind to the degeneracy of Rome, and made a very frank confession on that head one day to Melanchthon, who was insisting on a reformation in the lives of the clergy. The archbishop could not help expressing his opinion of the hopelessness of such a thing, not because it was not needed, but simply because it was chimerical. “What,” he exclaimed abruptly, “reform us?” we priests have always been good for nothing.” The archbishop was of opinion that there was not left enough of backbone in the priesthood to stand the process. The cure would certainly kill it. A Greater had pronounced the same judgment on the corrupt priesthood of a former age. “If the salt have lost its savor, it is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill, but men cast it out and it is trodden under foot.”

Charles had got the Diet which he had summoned in so high hopes, and to which he had come in such magnificent state, not doubting that he was advancing to a scene of victory; he had got

⁴Corp. Ref., 2, 155.

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more: he had got the Lutheran Confession-not a confession of trespass against their mother the Church, and a cry for the pardon of the Pope and the emperor, which he had prepared himself to hear, but a bold justification of all the doctrines the princes had professed, and all the steps they had taken-in short, a flag of revolt unfurled at the very foot of the imperial throne. Before punishing the offenses of nine years ago by executing the Edict of Worms, he must deal with this new development of Lutheranism. If he should pass it over in silence, on the pretext that it was an affair of dogmas merely, he would be visually tolerating the Protestant faith, and must nevermore mention the Worms proscription. If, on the other hand, he should call on the princes to retract, he must be prepared with something like reasonable grounds for demanding their submission, and, if need were, extorting it. He must steer between the Scylla of coercion and the Charybdis of toleration. This was all as yet the Diet had done for him. It had brought him new perplexities- more sleepless nights. It was mortifying to have to write to Clement VII. that the project they had spent a winter together at Bologna in concocting was speeding so ill-was, in fact, marching backwards.

Every hour was precious. Before sitting down to breakfast, steps had to be taken. Of the two courses open to him-tolerate or coerce?-it was clear that the latter was the one that must be taken in the last resort. But the emperor's edicts must be backed by reasons; and now it was that Charles painfully felt his unskilfulness in theology. Distracted rather than aided by the conflicting opinions and contrary counsels of the men around him, he resolved to look a little into this matter for himself, and for this end he ordered his secretary to prepare a French translation of the Confession. Two copies, as we have said, had been handed to Charles, the one in Latin and the other in German; but he thought he could better see the theological bearings of Lutheranism and the idiomatic beauties of Melancthon in French than in either of the other two languages. He required perfect accuracy of his secretary. "See," said he, "that not a word be wanting." The Lutheran princes who heard these words were pleased with the emperor's wish to be well-informed in their cause; and took them as a sign that he leaned to their side-a somewhat narrow foundation for so great a conclusion. The courtiers who knew the emperor better, shook their heads when they learned that

the Lutherans were reckoning Charles among the converts of the eloquent document of Melanchthon. It had already made some illustrious disciples among the lay princes; and one or two prince-bishops, as Cologne and Augsburg, it had almost persuaded to be Lutherans; but the head that wore the diadem was not to be numbered among those that were to bow to the force of truth.

While the emperor is seated at the breakfast table, the ante-chamber begins to be filled with a crowd of deputies. Who are they, and why are they here at this early hour? They are the ambassadors from the imperial cities, and they are here by command of the emperor. Before beginning his first lesson in Lutheran divinity, Charles will try what can be done with the towns.

Free towns have in all ages been objects of special jealousy and dislike to despots. The free cities of Germany were no exception to this rule. Charles viewed them with suspicion and abhorrence. They were the great stumbling-blocks in his path to that universal monarchy which it was his ambition to erect. But of the free imperial towns fourteen had given special cause of displeasure to the emperor. They had refused to submit to the Recess of the last Diet of Spires, that of 1529. The names of the offending cities were Strasburg, Nuremberg, Constance, Ulm, Reutlingen, Heilbronn, Memmingen, Lindau, Kempten, Windshelm, Isny, and Weissenberg. Their non-adherence to the Recess of the Diet had created a split in the Empire. An attempt must be made to heal the breach, and bring back the contumacious cities before their evil example had been followed by the others. Their deputies were now gathered, along with the rest, into the imperial ante-chamber. Frederick, count palatine, was sent to them to say, "that in the last Diet of Spires (1529) a decree had been made, which had been obeyed by most of the States, much to the emperor's satisfaction, but that some of the cities had rejected it, to the weakening of the Empire, and that Charles now called on them to submit to the Diet."⁵

Little had they expected, when they assembled that morning in the antechamber of the monarch, to have a demand like this made upon them. The eloquent words of Melanchthon were still ringing in their ears; they felt more convinced than ever, after listening to

⁵Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 130.

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his beautifully perspicuous and powerfully convincing exposition, that their faith was founded on the Word of God, and that they could not abandon it without peril to their souls; they had witnessed, only the day before, the elation of their brethren at this triumphant vindication, and they had shared their feelings. They had marked, too, the obvious perplexity into which the reading of the Confession had thrown the Romanists, how troubled their faces, how uneasy their attitudes, how significant the glances they exchanged with one another, and how frankly some of them had confessed that Melancthon's paper contained only the truth! A concession or an overture of conciliation would not have surprised them; but that the minister of Charles should on the morrow after this great triumph be the bearer of such a demand from the emperor did beyond measure astonish them. They had won the field; with them had remained the moral victory; but the vanquished suddenly put on the air of a conqueror.

The Protestant cities were asked to submit to the edict of the Diet of 1529. Let us see how much was involved in that demand. The Diet of 1529 abolished the toleration of 1526. Not only so: it placed all arrest upon the Protestant movement, and enacted that it should advance not a foot-breadth beyond the limits it had reached when the Recess of the Diet was published. As regarded all who were already Protestants, it graciously permitted them to remain so; but from this day forward, while Germany stood, not a prince, not a city, not an individual could enrol his name in the Protestant ranks or leave the Church of Rome, whatever his convictions or wishes might be. It went further; it provided for the re-introduction of the mass, and the whole machinery of Romanism, into Protestant provinces and cities. While it stringently forbade all proselytising on the Protestant side, it gave unbounded licence to it on the Popish. What could happen, under an arrangement of this sort, but that Protestantism should wither and disappear? One could prognosticate the year, almost the very day, when it would be extinct. It was at this hour, with the Augsburg Confession lying on the emperor's table, that the free cities were asked to assist in arranging for the funeral obsequies of Protestantism.

Nor does even this fully bring out the folly which Charles committed in making such a demand, and the treason of which the free

cities would have been guilty against the truth and the world, had they yielded to it. The Recess of 1529 was the act that had led them to send forth the great Protest from which they took their name. To adhere to the Recess was to abandon their Protest—was to pull down their flag as it floated before the eyes of all Christendom, a sign and promise to the nations of a glorious redemption from a great slavery.

They had not thought much of the act at the time; but the more they pondered it, the more they saw they had been led by a wisdom not their own to take up a position that was one of the most comprehensive and sublime in all history. With their Protest had come new liberties to the soul of man, and new rights and powers to human society. Their Protest had deposited in Christendom the one everlasting corner-stone of freedom and virtue—an emancipated conscience. But an emancipated conscience did not mean a lawless conscience, or a conscience guided by itself. Above conscience their Protest placed the Word of God—the light—the voice saying, “This is the way.” Above the Word they placed the Spirit that speaks in it. They gave to no man and no Church the power of authoritatively interpreting the Scriptures; and they took care to guard against the tyranny of which Scripture had been made the instrument in the hands of infallible interpreters; for he who can interpret the law as he pleases, can make the law to be what it suits him. Scripture alone, they said, can interpret Scripture. Thus they proclaimed the supremacy of Scripture, not as a fetter on the understanding, but a Divine bulwark around it. Above the Supremacy of Scripture they placed the supremacy of the Spirit Who inspired it; and in doing so they reared another rampart around the liberty of the understanding.

An emancipated conscience they committed to the guardianship of the Bible: and the supremacy of the Bible they placed under the sovereignty of God. Thus they brought conscience in immediate contact with her Lord, and human society they placed under the rule of its rightful and righteous king.

The Protest of 1529 was thus a grand era of restoration and reconciliation. It restored society to God. Rome had divorced the two. She had come in between God and society by her assumed exclusive and infallible power of interpreting the Scriptures. She made the law speak what she pleased, and thus for the government of God she had substituted her own. Protestantism came to reinstate the

Divine government over the world. It did so by placing the authority of Scripture above the chair of the Pope, and lifting the crown of Christ above the throne of the emperor.

So grand a restoration could not be evolved in a day, or even in a century. But the Protest of 1529 had all this in it. The stable basis, the majestic order, the ever-expanding greatness and power of Protestant States lay all enfolded in its three mighty principles-Conscience, the Scriptures, the Spirit-each in its order and subordination. This simple Protest contained all, as the acorn contains the oak, or as the morning contains the noonday.

Chapter 25: Attempted Refutation of the Confession [606]

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What is to be done with the Confession?-Perplexity of the Romanists- The Confession to be Refuted-Eck and Twenty Others chosen for this Work-Luther's Warnings-Melanchthon's and Charles's Forecast- Wrestlings in the Coburg-The Fourteen Protestant Free Cities- Refutation of the Confession -Vapid and Lengthy-Rejected by the Emperor-A Second Attempt-The Emperor's Sister-Her Influence with Charles-The Play of the Masks

Picture: The Deputies from the Imperial Cities Awaiting an Audience of Charles

Picture: Charles Witnessing the Play of the Masks

Picture: The Peller Court at Nuremberg

“Adhere to the Recess of 1529 and abandon your Protest,” was the message delivered from Charles to the ambassadors of the fourteen free cities, gathered in the imperial ante-chamber on the morning of the 26th June, 1530. When we think that that Protest meant a new age, which was bearing in with it Luther and the Protestant princes and cities, instead of being borne in by them, how foolish does that demand look, even when it comes from one who wore so many crowns, and had so numerous armies at his command! The deputies made answer that in a matter of so great moment time must be given them to deliberate. They retired, to return with their answer in writing only on the 7th of July. While the cities are preparing their reply, another matter calls for consideration. What is to be done with the Confession lying on the emperor's table? and what steps are to be taken to bring over the Elector John and the other Protestant princes?

We have seen the emperor dismiss the representatives of the Protestant cities with an injunction to take counsel and bring him word how they meant to act in the matter of the Decree of Spires, and whether they were prepared to abandon their Protest of 1529.

Scarcely have they left his presence when he summons a council of the Popish members of the Diet.

They have been called together to give advice respecting another matter that claims urgent attention from the emperor. The Confession of the Protestant princes is lying on his table; what is to be done with it? Lutheranism is not at Wittemberg only: it is here, in the Palatinate Palace of Augsburg, protesting with eloquent voice against the tyranny that would suppress it, crying aloud before the Diet, as by-and-by, if not silenced, it will cry before all Christendom, that Rome has corrupted the faith, and is become apostate. "What shall we do?" asked the emperor, of the princes and bishops now gathered round him, "how shall we dispose of this document?"

The emperor's interrogatory was the signal for the expression of a number of contrary opinions. It was not wise guidance, but distraction and embarrassment, that Charles found in the multitude of his counsellors. There were three distinct parties in the body around him. "We shall not," said one party, "chop logic with our opponents; while we are entangled in a theological labyrinth, they may escape. We have but one course to pursue, namely, to execute the Edict of Worms."¹ Another party, better acquainted with the secret wishes of Charles, said, "Let us refer the matter to the decision of the emperor." There came yet a third, formed of those who were somewhat vain of their traditional lore, and not unwilling to show it. "Let a few doctors," said they, "be appointed to write a Refutation of the Lutheran Confession, which may be read to the princes, and ratified by the emperor."

It was not the bishops who urged the emperor to extreme and violent courses. They rather, on the whole, employed their influence to check the sanguinary zeal of others. "I cannot advise his majesty to employ force," said Albert of Mainz, but the reason he assigned for his temperate counsels somewhat detracts from their generosity, "lest when the emperor retires the Lutherans retaliate upon the priests, and the Turk come in, in the end of the day, and reap with his scimitar what the Lutheran sword may have left." The Bishop of Augsburg drew upon himself the suspicion of a heretic in disguise by the lengths he was willing to go in conciliating the Protestants.

¹Corp. Ref., 2, 154-D'Aubigne, bk. 14, chap 8.

The Sacraments in both kinds, and the marriage of the priests, he was prepared to concede; even more, were it necessary- pointing evidently to private masses. “Masses!” exclaimed some; “abolish masses! why not say at once the kitchens of the cardinals?” All the ecclesiastics, however, were not so conciliatory. The Archbishop of Salzburg said tartly, “The Lutherans have laid before us a Confession written with black ink on white paper. Well, if I were emperor, I would answer them with red ink.”²

Some of the lay princes were the most fanatical and fiery in the council. George of Saxony and Joachim of Brandenburg outdid the most violent of the priests. The former hated Luther with a fervor that seemed to increase with his years, and the latter was known as a hare-brained fool, whom the mere mention of the word “Lutheran” sufficed to kindle into a rage. These two nobles pressed forward and gave their voices for war. Argument was tedious and uncertain, they urged, especially with sophists like those of Wittenberg; the sword was summary and much more to be relied upon. There was present a certain Count Felix of Verdenberg, whom the word war seemed to electrify. Scenting the battle from afar, he started up, and said, “If there is to be fighting against the Lutherans, I offer my sword, and I swear not to return it to its scabbard till the stronghold of Luther has been laid in the dust.” Count Felix doubtless would have backed these valorous words by not less valorous deeds but for the circumstance that, regaling himself with too copious draughts from the wine-flagon, he died a few days thereafter. It was the fanatical men who carried it in the council. Even the proposal of the middle party was rejected, which was to leave the matter to the adjudication of the emperor. That implied, the extreme men argued, that there were two parties and two causes. This was to misapprehend the matter wholly, said they. There was but one party-the Empire-and but one cause; for that of the Lutherans was rebellion, and to be dealt with only by the sword.

But before unsheathing the sword, they would first make trial with the pen. They would employ violence with all the better grace afterwards. They agreed that a Refutation of the Confession should be drawn up.

²Ibid, 2, 147-D’Aubigne.

Of course the theologians of the party were the men who were looked to, to undertake this task-an impossible one if the Bible was to count for anything, but at Augsburg the Bible had about as little standing as the Confession. Most of the Popish princes had brought their divines and learned men with them to the Diet. "Some," said Jonas, "have brought their ignoramuses." Cochlaeus, Jonas ranks in this class. Faber and Eck held a better position, being men of some learning, though only of second-rate ability, if so much. There was but one man of surpassing talent and scholarship outside the Protestant pale, Erasmus, and he was not at Augsburg. He had been invited by both proxies, but their solicitations failed to woo him from his retreat at Basle. The great scholar sent characteristic excuses of absence to both. To the Protestants he wrote, "Ten councils could not unravel the deep plot of your tragedy, much less could I. If any one starts a proposition that has common sense on its side, it is at once set down as Lutheranism." But, changing his tactics when he addressed himself to the other side, he found for the Romanists a few pleasant words at the expense of the Lutherans. What a memorable example is Erasmus of the difference between the Renaissance and the Reformation-the revival of letters and the revival of principles!

But the Confession must be refuted, and for the preparation of such a work Rome can employ only such theologians as she possesses. Faber, who had been promoted to the Archbishopric of Vienna; Eck, the opponent and vituperator of Luther; Cochlaeus, the Archdeacon of Frankfort, with seventeen others, mostly Dominican monks, twenty in all, were told off to write an answer to the Confession of the Protestant princes.

These were all extreme Romanists. It was clear what sort of instrument would issue from such a workshop. That these men would make any attempt to meet the views of the Lutherans, or that they would look candidly at the reasonings of Melancthon, and grapple seriously with them, much less overturn them, was what no one expected. Campeggio is believed to have been the man who gave in this list of names; but no one knew better than himself the utter futility of what he was setting his nominees to do. The decided character of the committee was a virtual declaration that there was to be no concession, and that Rome was meditating no surrender. Those who feared conciliation were now able to dismiss their fears,

and those who wished for it were compelled to lay aside their vain hopes. "Doctor," inquired the Duke of Bavaria, addressing Eck, "can you confute that paper out of the Bible?" "No," replied he, "but it may be easily done from the Fathers and Councils." "I understand," rejoined the duke, "I understand; the Lutherans are in Scripture, and we are outside."³ The worthy Chancellor of Ingolstadt was of the same opinion with another of his co-religionists, that nothing is to be made of Protestants so long as they remain within the castle of the Bible; but bring them from their stronghold down into the level plain of tradition, and nothing is easier than to conquer them.

The clear eye of Luther saw what was coming. He knew that it was not in Dr. Eck, and the whole cohort of his coadjutors to boot, to refute the Confession of Melanchthon, and that there was but one alternative, namely, that the strong sword of Charles should come in to repress what logic could not confute. "You are waiting for your adversaries' answer," wrote he to his friends at Augsburg; "it is already written, and here it is: The Fathers, the Fathers, the Fathers; the Church, the Church, the Church; usage, custom; but of the Scriptures-nothing."⁴ Then the emperor, supported by the testimony of these arbiters, will pronounce against you; and then will you hear boastings on all sides that will ascend up to heaven, and threatenings that will descend even to hell."

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The same issue was now shaping itself to the eye of other two men- Melanchthon and the Emperor Charles. But though all three- Luther, Melanchthon, and Charles-had arrived at this conclusion, they had arrived at it by different roads. Luther in the Coburg, like the astronomer in his watchtower, with eyes uplifted from earth and fixed on heaven, deduced the future course of affairs from the known laws of the Divine government, and the known facts of the Protestant and Popish systems. Melanchthon came to his conclusion to a large extent by sense. At Augsburg he had a close view of the parties arrayed against him; he heard their daily threats, and knew the intrigues at work around him, and felt that they could have only a violent end. The emperor divined the denuament on grounds peculiar to himself. He had sounded Luther as to whether he was

³Mathesius, Hist., p. 99.

⁴Luth. Opp., 4, 96.-D'Aubigne, bk. 14, chap. 8.

willing to abide by his decision of the question. The Reformer replied through the Elector John: "If the emperor wish it, let him be judge. But let him decide nothing contrary to the Word of God. Your highness cannot put the emperor above God Himself."⁵ This was Luther's way of saying that in spiritual things the State possessed no jurisdiction. This swept away a hope to which till now the emperor had clung—that the matter would be left to his arbitration. This he saw could not now be. On the other hand, the extreme party among the Romanists were the majority at Augsburg. They were ruling in the Diet; they were ruling at Rome also; and they would no more leave the final determination of the question in the hands of Charles than the Protestants would. To the emperor nothing would remain but the by no means enviable and dignified task of executing the resolve on which he saw the fanatical advisers of the Papacy were determined to precipitate the controversy—namely, the employment of force.

This forecast of the issue on the part of all three affected each of them very differently. Melancthon it almost overwhelmed in despair; Charles it stung into a morose and gloomy determination to avenge himself on a cause which had thrust itself into the midst of his great projects to thwart and vex him; Luther, on the other hand, it inspired with courage, we might say with defiance, if we can so characterise that scornful yet holy disdain in which he held all who were warring against Protestantism, from Charles down to Dr. Eck and Cochlaeus. As regards Luther and Melancthon, the difference between them was this: Melancthon thought that the sword of the emperor would kill the cause, Luther knew that it would kill only its adherents, and through their death give life to the cause. The cause was God's: of this he had the firmest possible conviction. That surely meant victory. If not, it came to this, that the King of Heaven could do only what the King of Spain permitted Him to do; and that Christ must go forward or must turn back, must uphold this cause and abandon that, as the emperor willed—in other words, that Charles and not God was the ruler of the world.

We are compelled to ask, when we see the courageous man shut up in the Coburg, and the timid and trembling one sent into the field,

⁵Ibid., 4, 83-D' Aubigne.

was this the best arrangement? Was the right man in the right place? The arrangement we would have made would have been exactly the reverse. We would have sent the strong man to fight the battle, and withdrawn the weak and feeble one into the retreat of the Coburg, there to commune and to pray. But in this, as in other instances, we are taught that God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. The actual arrangement was the best. It was the strong man that was needed to pray; it was the weak one that was fitted to receive and act upon the answer. It is only the prayer of faith that prevails, and it is only to a great faith that great blessings are given. Melancthon, therefore, would have been out of place in the Coburg, but his weakness in the field illustrated the power of his Master, and showed who was doing the work. Besides, the lengths he was willing to go to meet the Papists-and he went much further than Luther would have done-only the more manifestly put Rome in the wrong, and left the blame of the final rupture with her.

But if Luther with uplifted hands drew down daily strength from the skies, as the conductor draws down the electric fire from the clouds, it was to send on the Divine influence, which descended from above, to those who had so much need of it at Augsburg. Faith begets faith, and Luther became as God to Melancthon and the men around him. Let us enter the Coburg. The voice as of a man in a great agony falls on our ear. He groans, he cries; he cries yet more earnestly. Whose voice is it? Listen. It is Luther's. We need not enter his chamber; we can distinctly hear every word where we stand outside his closet door in the corridor. "I have once heard him praying," wrote Veit Dietrich, a friend, who at times visited the Reformer in the castle, "communing with God as a Father and Friend, and reminding Him of His own promises from the Psalms, which he was certain would be made good-'I know, O God, Thou art our dear God and Father: therefore am I certain that Thou wilt destroy the persecutors of Thy Church. If Thou dost not destroy them, Thou art in like danger with us. It is Thy own cause. The enemies of the cross of Christ assault us. It appertains to Thee and the honour of Thy name to protect Thy confessors at Augsburg. Thou hast promised, Thou wilt do it; for Thou hast done it from the beginning. Let Thine help shine forth in this extremity.'"

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The prayer has gone up; it has knocked at the gates of the eternal temple; it has unlocked the fountains of God's power; and now an air celestial fills the chamber of the Coburg, and a Divine strength is infused into the soul of its inmate. What Luther has freely received he freely gives to others. He sends it onward to Augsburg thus: - "What is the meaning," writes he to Melanchthon, "of fearing, trembling, caring, and sorrowing? Will He not be with us in this world's trifles who has given us His own Son? In private troubles I am weak, and you are strong-if, at least, I can call private the conflicts I have with Satan-but in public trials I am what you are in private. The cause is just and true-it is Christ's cause. Miserable saintling that I am! I may well turn pale and tremble for myself, but I can never fear for the cause." "I pray, have prayed, and shall pray for thee, Philip," he wrote in another letter, "and I have felt the Amen in my heart." "Our Lord Jesus Christ," he wrote to Jonas, "is King of kings and Lord of lords. If He disown the title at Augsburg, He must disown it in heaven and earth. Amen." ⁶

So did the battle proceed on the two sides. Wiles, frowns, threats, with the sword as the last resort, are seen on the one side-prayers, tears, and faith on the other. The Emperor Charles, the legate Campeggio, and the Popish theologians at Augsburg saw only Melanchthon. They beheld him dejected, bending under a load of anxieties, and coming to them each day with a new concession or explanation, if haply it might end the battle. The adversary with whom they were all the while contending, however, was one they saw not-one who was out of their reach-the man of prayer in the Coburg, or rather the God-man at the right hand of Power in heaven- the Ancient of Days.

We have seen the emperor send away two commissions, with instructions to each to deliberate on the matter referred to it, and return on a future day with the answer. They are here, in the presence of the emperor, to give in their report. First come the representatives of the fourteen cities which had refused adherence to the Edict of Spire, 1529. Of these cities some were of Zwingle's sentiments on the Sacrament, while others agreed with the Augsburg Confession. This difference of opinion had introduced the wedge of discord, and

⁶Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 32, p. 182.

had raised the hopes of the emperor. Nevertheless, in the presence of the common foe, they were united and firm. They replied to Charles “that they were not less desirous than their ancestors had been to testify all loyalty and obedience to his imperial majesty, but that they could not adhere to the Recess of Spires without disobeying God, and compromising the salvation of their souls.”⁷ Thus the hope vanished which the emperor had cherished of detaching the cities from the princes, and so weakening the Protestant front.

The next body to appear at the foot of the emperor’s throne, with an account of their labours, were the twenty theologians to whom had been entrusted the important matter of preparing an answer to the Protestant Confession. They had gone to work with a will, meeting twice a day; and we can do justice to their zeal only when we reflect that it was now on the eve of the dog-days. Eck and his company showed themselves experts at producing what they understood to be wanted, a condemnation rather than a refutation. Eck had declared beforehand that the latter could not be forthcoming if Scripture were allowed a hearing. This very considerably simplified and lightened the task, and in a fortnight Eck and his coadjutors gave in a document of not less than 280 pages. In point of bulk this performance might have sufficed to refute not one but a dozen such Confessions as that of Augsburg. Charles surveyed the ponderous Refutation with dismay. He appeared to divine that it would only fortify that which it was meant to overthrow, and overthrow that which it was intended to fortify. It did not improve on closer acquaintance. It was vapid as well as bulky. It was pointless as a “Refutation,” and vigorous only in its abuse. Its call for “blood” was unmistakable.⁸ Charles saw that it would never do to give the world an opportunity of contrasting the lumbering periods and sanguinary logic of Eck, with the terse and perspicuous style and lofty sentiments of Melanchthon. Her worst foe could not do Rome a more unkindly act, or Wittenberg a greater service, than to publish such a document. Another Refutation must be prepared; yet even this inspired but little hope, for to whom could the emperor commit the task, except to the old hands? Letters, too,

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⁷Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 130.

⁸Corp. Ref., 2. 193-198.

alas! were going over to the side of Wittemberg; and soon nothing would remain with Rome but one thing-the sword.

But the Reformation was not yet able to endure persecution, and meanwhile friends of the Gospel were placed one after another near Charles, to pluck away his hand when it was laid on his sword's hilt, with intent to unsheathe and use it against the Gospel. He had buried Gattinara, the friend of toleration, at Innspruck. This left the legate Campeggio without a rival in the imperial councils. But only three days after the reading of the Confession two ladies of high rank came to Augsburg, whose quiet but powerful influence restored the balance broken by the death of Gattinara. The one was Maw, the sister of the emperor, and widow of Louis, King of Hungary; the other was her sister-in-law, the Queen of Bohemia, and wife of Ferdinand of Austria. The study of the Scriptures had opened in both the way to peace. Their hearts had been won for the Gospel, and when Campeggio approached to instil his evil counsel into the ear of the emperor, these two ladies were able, by a word fitly spoken, to neutralise its effects upon the mind of their brother, and draw him back from the paths of violence to which, at the instigation of the legate, he seemed about to commit himself.⁹

In those days truth could sometimes be spoken to princes, in a figure when it dared not be told them in plain language. One day, during his stay in Augsburg, as Charles sat at dinner with his lords, a message was brought to him that some comedians wished to amuse him and his guests. Instant permission was given, for the request was in accordance with the manners of the age, and excited no suspicion. First an old man, in a doctor's gown, tottered across the floor, carrying a burden of sticks, some long, some short. Throwing down the sticks on the hearth in confusion, he turned to retire. On his back, now displayed to the courtiers, was the name-JOHN REUCHLIN. A second mask now entered, also attired as a doctor. He went up to the hearth, and began deftly arranging the sticks. He worked assiduously for a little while, but, despite his pains, the long and short, the crooked and the straight, would not pair; so, giving up his task, with a sardonic smile on his countenance, he made his exit. Charles and his lords, as he walked out, read on

⁹Seckendorf, lib. 2, sec. 32, p. 183.

his back-erasmus of rotterdam. The comedy was beginning to have interest. A third now entered: this time it was a monk, in the frock and cowl of the Augustines. With keen eye and firm step he crossed the hall, bearing a brazier filled with live coals. He raked the sticks together, not waiting to sort them, put a coal underneath the heap, blew it up, and soon a blazing fire was roaring on the hearth. As he withdrew he showed on his back-MARTIN LUTHER. The plot was thickening.

A fourth appeared-a stately personage, covered with the insignia of empire. He gazes with displeasure at the fire. He draws his sword, and plunges it in amongst the burning faggots; the more they are stirred the more fiercely they blaze. He strikes again and again; the flame mounts higher, and the red sparks fall thicker around. It is plain that he is feeding, not quenching, the fire. The mask turns and strides across the hall in great anger He has no name, nor is it necessary; every one divines it, though no one utters it.

Yet another-a fifth! He comes forward with solemn and portly air. His robes, which are of great magnificence, are priestly. He wears a triple crown on his head, and the keys of St. Peter are suspended from his girdle. On seeing the fire this great personage is seized with sudden anguish, and wrings his hands. He looks round for something with which to extinguish it. He espies at the farther end of the hall two vessels, one containing water and the other oil. He rushes eagerly to get hold of the one containing the water; in his hurry he clutches the wrong vessel, that filled with the oil, and empties it on the fire ¹⁰ The fire blazes up with a fury that singes his priestly robe, and compels its unfortunate wearer to escape for his safety. The comedy is at an end.

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The authors of this play never came forward to receive the praise due to their ingenuity, or to claim the pecuniary reward usually forthcoming on such occasions. They doubtless held it would be reward enough if the emperor profited by its moral. "Let thy gifts be to thyself," said the prophet, when he read the writing on the wall of the

¹⁰This, of course, was before the Vatican decree of 1870. Such a mistake is not conceivable now; although it perplexes one to think that the Popes of the age of Leo X. were, according to the decree, as infallible as those of the days of Pio Nono; seeing the latter-with greater generosity than prudence-admitted all his predecessors to partnership with him in his attribute of infallibility.

king's palace. So said the men who now interpreted in the Palatinate Palace of Augsburg the fate of the Empire and the Papacy. ¹¹

¹¹D'Aubigne, bk. 14, chap. 9. Worsley, *Life of Luther*, vol. 2, pp 226, 227.

Chapter 26: End of the Diet of Augsburg

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Diplomacy-The Protestant Princes-John the Steadfast-Bribes and Threatenings-Second Refutation of the Confession-Submission Demanded from the Protestants-They Refuse-Luther's Faith- Romanists resume Negotiations-Melancthon's Concessions- Melancthon's Fall-All Hopes of Reconciliation Abandoned-Recess of the Diet-Mortification and Defeat of the Emperor

Charles V. laughed at the humor of the comedy, but did not ponder the wisdom of its moral. He went on poking amongst the red faggots, first with diplomacy and next with the sword, but with no other result than that which the nameless authors of the piece acted in the Palace of the Palatinate had warned him would ensue, that of kindling a fire on the wide hearth of Europe, which would in the end not merely singe the hem of the Pontifical robe and the fringe of the Imperial mantle, but would consume the body of both Empire and Papacy.

The emperor had endeavored to introduce the thin end of the wedge, which he hoped would split up the Protestant free cities: an attempt, however, which came to nothing. The Lutheran princes were to be next essayed.

They were taken one by one, in the hope that they would be found less firm when single than they were when taken together. Great offers-loftier titles, larger territories, more consideration-were made to them, would they but return to the Church. ¹ When bribes failed to seduce them, threats were had recourse to. They were given to understand that, stripped of title and territory, they would be turned adrift upon the world as poor as the meanest of their subjects. They were reminded that their religion was a new one; that their adherence to it branded all their ancestors as heretics; that they were a minority in the Empire; and that it was madness in them to

¹Sleidan, bk. 7, pp. 132. 133.

defy the power and provoke the ire of the emperor. Neither were threats able to bend them to submission. They had come to the Diet of 1526 with the words written upon their shields, *Verbum Domini manet in eternum*-the word of the Lord endureth for ever-and, steadfast to their motto, their faith taught them not to fear the wrath of the powerful Charles. No efforts were spared to compel the Elector John to bow the neck. If he should yield, the strength of the confederacy would be broken-so it was thought-and the emperor would make short work with the theologians. Why the latter should be so obstinate the emperor could not imagine, unless it were that they stood behind the broad shield of the elector. Charles sent for John, and endeavored to shake him by promises. When it was found that these could not detach him from the Protestant Confession, the emperor strove to terrify him by threats. He would take from him his electoral hat; he would chase him from his dominions; he would let loose against him the whole power of the Empire, and crush him as a potsherd. John saw himself standing on the brink of an abyss. He must make his choice between his crown and his Savior. Melancthon and all the divines conjured the elector not to think of them. They were ready that moment to endure any manner of death the emperor might decree against them, if that would appease his wrath. The elector refused to profit by this magnanimous purpose of self-devotion. He replied with equal magnanimity to the theologians that "he also must confess his Lord." He went back to the emperor, and calmly announced his resolution by saying that "he had to crave of his majesty that he would permit him and his to render an account to God in those matters that concerned the salvation of their souls." John risked all; but in the end he retained all, and amply vindicated his title to the epithet given him-"John the Constant."

After six weeks, the trio-Faber, Eck, and Cochlaeus-produced, with much hard labor and strain of mind, another Refutation of the Confession, or rather the former remodelled and abbreviated. Charles could show no less honour to the work of his doctors than had been shown to the Confession of Melancthon. On the 3rd September he sat down upon his throne, and calling his princes round him, commanded the Refutation to be read in their presence. In those doctrines which are common to both creeds, such as the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ, the Refutation agreed with the

Confession. It also made an admission which would, but for the statement that followed, and which largely neutralised it, have been a most important one, namely, that faith is necessary in the Sacrament.² But it went on to affirm that man is born with the power of performing good works, and that these works co-operate with faith in the justification of the sinner: thus rearing again the old fabric of salvation by works, which the former admission respecting the necessity of faith appeared to have thrown down. On another vital point the Refutation and the Confession were found to be in direct and fatal antagonism. Eck and his colleagues maintained the Divine authority of the hierarchy, and of course the correlative duty of absolute submission to it; the Protestants acknowledged no infallible rule on earth but the Scriptures. The two Churches, after very laborious effort on both sides, had come as near to each other as it appeared possible to come; but neither could conceal from itself the fact that there was still a gulf between them—an impassable gulf, for neither could pass to the other without ceasing to be what it had hitherto been. Should the Papacy pass over, it left ten centuries behind it; the moment it touched the Wittemberg shore it threw off its allegiance to Councils and traditions, and became the subject of another power. Should Protestantism pass over, it left the Bible behind it, and submitting to the old yoke of the Seven Hills, confessed that the Wittemberg movement had been a rebellion.

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When the reading was finished the emperor addressed the elector and the other Protestant princes to the effect that, seeing their Confession had now been refuted, it was their duty to restore peace to the Church, and unity to the Empire, by returning to the Roman obedience. He demanded, in fine, consent to the articles now read, under pain of the ban of the Empire.

The Protestant princes were not a little surprised at the emperor's peremptoriness. They were told that they had been refuted, but unless they should be pleased to take the emperor's word for it, they had no proof or evidence that they had been so. Their own understandings did not tell them so. The paper now read had assented to some of the articles of their Confession, it had dissented from a good many others, but as to confuting even one of them, this, to the best of their

²D'Aubigne, 4, 209.

judgment, it had not done; and as they knew of no power possessed by the emperor of changing bad logic into good, or of transforming folly into wisdom, the Protestant princes—a copy of the Refutation having been denied them intimated to Charles that they still stood by their Confession.

The design for which the Diet had been summoned was manifestly miscarrying. Every day the Protestants were displaying fresh courage, and every day their cause was acquiring moral strength. In the same proportion did the chagrin, anger, and perplexities of the Romanists increase. Every new movement landed them in deeper difficulties. For the emperor to fulminate threats which those against whom they were directed openly defied, and which the man who uttered them dared not carry into execution, by no means tended to enhance the imperial dignity. The unhappy Charles was at his wit's end; he knew not how to hide his mortification and discomfiture; and, to complete the imbroglio, an edict arrived from a consistory of cardinals held at Rome, 6th July, 1530, disallowing and forbidding the ultimatum of the Protestants as “opposed to the religion and prejudicial to the discipline and government of the Church.”³

Ere this an event had taken place which helped to expedite the business. On the night of Saturday, the 6th of August, Philip of Hesse made his escape from Augsburg. Amid the cajoleries and threatenings of the Diet he was firm as a rock amid the waves, but he saw no purpose to be served by longer attendance at the Assembly. Chafed by continual delays, indignant at the dissimulations of the Papists, tempted today by brilliant offers from the emperor, and assailed tomorrow by as terrible threats; moreover looked askance upon by the Lutheran princes, from his known leaning to Zwingle on the question of the Lord's Supper—thoroughly wearied out from all these causes, he resolved on quitting the city. He had asked leave of the emperor, but was refused it. Donning a disguise, he slipped out at the gate at dusk, and, attended by a few horsemen, rode away. Desirous of preventing his flight, the emperor gave orders over-night to have the gates watched, but before the guards had taken their posts the landgrave was gone, and was now many leagues distant from Augsburg.

³Pallavicino, bk. 3, chap. 4, p. 195.

All was consternation at the court of the emperor when the flight of the landgrave became known next morning. The Romanists saw him, in imagination, returning at the head of an army. They pictured to themselves the other Protestant princes making their escape and sounding the tocsin of war. All was alarm, and terror, and rage in the Popish camp. The emperor was not yet prepared for hostilities; he shrunk back from the extremity to which he had been forcing matters, and from that day his bearing was less haughty and his language less threatening to the Protestants. [616]

Luther, apart in his Castle of Coburg, was full of courage and joy. He was kept informed of the progress of affairs at Augsburg, and of the alternate fears and hopes that agitated his friends. Like the traveller in the Alps, who sees the clouds at his feet and hears the thunder rolling far beneath him, while around him is eternal sunshine, the Reformer, his feet planted on the mountain of God's power, looked down upon the clouds that hung so heavily above his friends in Augsburg, and heard far beneath the mutterings of imperial wrath; but neither could the one darken the sunshine of his peace, nor the other shake his confidence in that throne to which, in faith and prayer, his eyes were continually uplifted. His letters at this time show a singular elevation of faith, and a corresponding assurance of victory. To take an instance, "I beheld," says he, writing to his friends, "thick clouds hanging above us like a vast sea; I could neither perceive ground on which they reposed, nor cords by which they were suspended; and yet they did not fall upon us, but saluted us rapidly and passed away." Emperors and armies, and all the array of earthly power, what are they? black vapors, which seem charged with tempest and destruction, but, just as they are about to burst, they are driven away by the breath of the Almighty, as clouds are driven before the wind. But fully to realize this we must mount to Luther's elevation. We must stand where we have the cloud beneath, not above us.

Meanwhile in the Diet promises had been tried and failed; threats had been tried and failed; negotiations were again opened, and now the cause had wellnigh been wrecked. Luther lived above the cloud, but unhappily Melancthon, who had to sustain the chief part in the negotiations, lived beneath it, and, not seeing the cords that held it up, and imagining that it was about to fall, was on the point of

surrendering the whole cause to Rome. During the slow incubation of the Refutation, seven men were chosen (13th August) on each side, to meet in conference and essay the work of conciliation.⁴ They made rapid progress up to a certain point; but the moment they touched the essentials of either faith, they were conclusively stopped. The expedient was tried of reducing the commission to three on each side, in the hope that with fewer members there would be fewer differences. The chief on the Protestant side was Melancthon, of whom Pallavicino says that “he had a disposition not perverse, although perverted, and was by nature as desirous of peace as Luther was of contention.”⁵ Well did Melancthon merit this compliment from the pen of the Catholic historian. For the sake of peace he all but sacrificed himself, his colleagues, and the work on which he had spent so many years of labor and prayer. His concessions to the Romanists in the Commission were extraordinary indeed. He was willing to agree with them in matters of ceremony, rites, and feasts. In other and more important points, such as the mass, and justification by faith, findings were come to in which both sides acquiesced, being capable of a double interpretation. The Papists saw that they had only to bide their time to be able to put their own construction on these articles, when all would be right. As regarded the marriage of priests, communion in both kinds, and some similar matters, the Romanists agreed to allow these till the meeting of the next General Council. Touching the government of the Church, Melancthon, and his colleagues in the Commission, were willing to submit to the restored jurisdiction of the bishops, and to acknowledge the Pope as Head of the Church, by human right. There was not much behind to surrender; a concord on this basis would have been the burial of the Reformation. Melancthon, in fact, was building unconsciously a sepulcher in which to entomb it. The lay Christians in Augsburg felt as if they were witnessing its obsequies.⁶ Consternation and grief took possession of the Swiss Protestants. “They are preparing their

⁴Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 132. Pallavicino, lib. 3, cap. 4, p. 195.

⁵Pallavicino, lib. 3, cap. 4, p. 195.

⁶Pallavicino says that Melancthon “had fallen into hatred and reproach with his own party” (in odio ed in biasimo de” suoi), and Sleidan informs us that when chosen one of the Committee of Three it was on the condition that he should make no more concessions (Pallavicino, p. 196; Sleidan, p. 132). Pallavicino (lib. 3, cap. 4, p. 135) gives a letter

return to Rome,” said Zwingle. Luther was startled and confounded. He read the proposed concessions, took his pen and wrote forthwith to Augsburg as follows: -

“I learn that you have begun a marvellous work, namely, to reconcile Luther and the Pope; but the Pope will not be reconciled, and Luther begs to be excused. And if in despite of them you succeed in this affair, then, after your example, I will bring together Christ and Belial.”⁷

This, one would think, should have torn the bandage from the eyes of Melancthon, and revealed to him the abyss towards which he was advancing. He was not to be counselled even by Luther. His patience was fretted, his temper soured, he began to brow-beat his colleagues, and was about to consummate his work of conciliation as he termed it, but in reality of surrender, when deliverance came from another quarter.

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Smitten with madness in their turn the Romanists drew back when on the very point of grasping the victory. The matter in dispute between the two parties had been reduced to three points nominally, really to one—Does man merit by his good works? The Protestants maintained the negative, and the Papists the affirmative, on this point. The first briefly sums up the Protestant theology; the last is the corner-stone of the Roman faith. Neither party would yield, and the conferences were broken off.⁸ Thus Rome lost the victory, which would in the end have fallen to her, had she made peace on the basis of Melancthon’s concessions. Her pride saved the German Reformation.

It now remained only for the emperor to draw up the Recess of the Diet. The edict was promulgated on the 22nd September, and was to the following effect:—That the Protestant princes should be allowed till the 15th April next to reconcile themselves to the Pope and to the rest of Christendom, and that meanwhile they should permit in their dominions no innovations in religion, no circulation of Protestant books, and no attempts at proselytism, and that they should assist the

of Melancthon’s addressed to Campeggio, which is all but an unqualified submission to Rome. Its genuineness has been questioned, but D’Aubigne sees no reason to doubt it.

⁷Luth. Opp., 4, pp. 144-151.

⁸Pallavicino, lib. 3, cap. 4, p. 197.

emperor in reducing the Anabaptists and Zwinglians.⁹ This edict Charles would have enforced at once with the sword, but the spirit displayed by the Protestant princes, the attitude assumed by the Turk, and the state of the emperor's relations with the other sovereigns of Europe put war out of his power; and the consequence was that the monarch who three months before had made his entry into Augsburg with so much pomp, and in so high hopes of making all things and parties bend to his will, retired from it full of mortification and chagrin, disappointed in all his plans, and obliged to conceal his discomfiture under a show of moderation and leniency.

⁹Pallavicino, lib. 3, cap. 4. Sleidan, bk. 7, p. 135.

Chapter 27: A Retrospect-1517-1530-Progress

Glance back-The Path continually Progressive-The Gains Of Thirteen Years-Provinces and Cities Evangelised in Germany-Day Breaking in other Countries-German Bible-German Church-A Saxon Paradise-Political Movements-Their Subordination to Protestantism-Wittemberg the Center of the Drama-Charles V. and his Campaigns-Attempts to Enforce the Edict of Worms-Their Results- All these Attempts work in the Opposite Direction-Onward March of Protestantism-Downward Course of every Opposing Interest- Protestantism as distinguished from Primitive Christianity-The Two Bibles

Picture: Philip of Hesse

Picture: Escape of Philip of Hesse from Augsburg

Before the curtain rises on a new development of the great drama, let us pause, and cast a glance back on the track over which we have passed. The few moments we may spend in this retrospect will amply repay us by disclosing, more clearly perhaps than we saw them while we were narrating them, the successive and ascending stages of the movement. It may well amaze us to think how short our journey has been, measured by the time it has occupied; yet how long it is, measured by the progress which has been made. It was but yesterday that the monk's hammer awakened the echoes of the streets of Wittemberg, and now it seems as if centuries had rolled away since that day, and brought with them the new world in which we find ourselves. On ordinary occasions, many years, it may be ages, must pass before an idea can establish for itself a universal dominion in the minds of men. Hardly has Luther uttered his great idea when, like the light, it breaks out on the right hand and on the left, and shines from one end of heaven even unto the other.

How notable, too, the circumstance that our journey has been a continually progressive one! Steps backward there have been none. The point reached today has ever been in advance of that arrived at [618]

on the day before. How wonderful is this when we think that no one had marked out the Church's path from her house of bondage to a land of liberty! And still more wonderful is it when we reflect that those who were the first to tread that path often found their wisdom at fault. Ever and anon their courage failed and their faith faltered; and never were more than a few steps of their road visible at one time. All beyond lay hid in night, overhung by lowering clouds that seemed charged with thunder. But ever as the little Wittemberg band went forward, the cloud removed and stood further off. One, unseen but mighty, walked before them. And if at times the clouds returned, and the storm threatened to burst, they heard a sublime Voice speaking to them out of the darkness and saying, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."¹

[619] Of these thirteen fruitful years between the 31st October, 1517,
[620] when Luther posted up his Theses, and the 25th June, 1530, when the Augsburg Confession was read in presence of the emperor, how surprising the gains when we come to reckon them up! Electoral Saxony is Reformed, and its sovereign is seen marching in the van of the Reforming princes. Hesse is evangelised, and its magnanimous landgrave has placed himself by the side of the elector as his companion in arms in the great battle of Protestantism.

In Franconia, Silesia, East Friesland, Prussia, Brunswick, Lunenburg, and Anhalt the light is spreading. The Gospel has been welcomed in the free towns of Nuremberg, Ulm, Augsburg, Strasburg, Lubeck, Bremen, Hamburg, and many others, bringing with it a second morning to the arts, the commerce, and the liberties of these influential communities. Every day princes, counts, and free cities press forward to enroll themselves in the Protestant host and serve under the Protestant banner; and in many cases where the ruler remains on the side of Rome, a not inconsiderable portion of his subjects have forsaken the old faith and embraced the Reformation.

Wider still does the light spread. It breaks out on all sides. The skies of Bohemia, Moravia, and Hungary have brightened anew- and already in these countries have been laid the foundations of a pow-

¹Isaiah 43:2.

erful Protestant Church, destined, alas! to sink all too soon under the gathering tempests of persecution. In Denmark and Sweden the Reformation is marching on to its establishment. The Protestant standard has been planted on the shores of Zurich, and the neighboring cantons are rallying round it. The Alps brighten from one hour to another, and the radiance with which they glow is reflected on the plains of Northern Italy. In France, at the court of Francis I., and in the Sorbonne, so jealous of its fame for orthodoxy, there are men who are not ashamed to confess that they have bowed to the authority of the Gospel, and consecrated their lives to its service. In England the Lollard movement, which appeared to have gone to sleep with the ashes of its martyrs, is awakening from slumber, and girding itself for a second career more glorious than the first. In Scotland the light of the new day is gladdening the eyes, and its breath stirring the souls of men. Luther's tracts and Tyndale's New Testaments have entered that country. ² In 1528 the die is cast, and Scotland is secured for the Reformation; for now Patrick Hamilton is burned at the stake at St. Andrews, and his martyr-pile becomes the funeral torch of the Papacy in that country. So wide is the sphere which thirteen short years have sufficed to fill with the light of Protestantism.

Nor must we omit to note that in the midst of the German nation, like a pillar of light, now stands the German Bible. The eye that sees this Light rejoices in it; the ear that hears this Voice blesses it. In the presence of this Divine teacher, human authority, which had so long held the understanding in chains, is overthrown, and the German people, escaping from the worst of all bondage, enter on possession of the first and highest of all liberty, the liberty of conscience.

Further, in Saxony and Hesse there is now an organized Church. The ground, cleared of monasteries, convents, indulgence-boxes, and other noxious growths of mediaevalism, begins to be covered with congregations, and planted with schools. Pastors preach the Gospel, for whom salaries have been provided; and an ecclesiastical board administers Church discipline and exercises a general supervision over the clergy. Protestantism, no longer a system of

²See *Scottish Reformation*, by Peter Lorimer, D.D., Professor of Theology, English Presbyterian College, London. Lond., 1860.

abstract doctrines, has now found an instrumentality through which to elevate the lives of men and reform the constitutions of society. Germany, from the wilderness it was a few years ago, is becoming a garden. Luther luxuriates over the rich verdure that begins to clothe Saxony. His pen has left us a fascinating description of it, and his words have all the warm coloring of the sacred idyll from which indeed his imagery would appear to be borrowed: "I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded."³ "It gives me great and singular pleasure," says the Reformer, writing to the elector, 22nd May, 1530, "when I see that boys and girls can now understand and speak better concerning God and Christ, than formerly could have been done by the colleges, monasteries, and schools of the Papacy, or than they can do even yet. There is thus planted in your highness's dominions a very pleasant Paradise, to which there is nothing similar in the whole world. It is as if God should say, 'Most beloved Prince John, I commend these children to thee, as my most precious treasure; they are my celestial Paradise of pleasant plants. Be thou a father to them. I place them under thy protection and rule, and honour thee by making thee the president and patron of this heavenly garden.'"

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Nor can we fail to mark, in fine, how entire and complete, all through this epoch, is the subordination of Political events to the Protestant movement. If we take our stand at Wittemberg and cast our eyes over the wide field around us, attentively observing the movements, the plots, the combinations, and the battles that mark the progress of the great drama, our convictions become only the stronger the longer we gaze, that we are standing in the center of the field, and that this is the heart of the action. From any other point of view all is confusion; from this, and from this alone, all is order. Events far and near, on the Bosphorus and on the Tagus, in the land of the Moslem and in the dominions of the Spaniard, find here their common point of convergence. Emperors and kings, dukes and princes, Popes and bishops, all move around Luther, and all have been given into his hand to be used by him as the work may require. We see Charles waging great campaigns and fighting great battles;

³Song of Solomon 6:11.

all this hard service is for Romanism, he believes, but Protestantism comes in and gathers the spoils. In truth the emperor is about as helpful to the movement as the Reformer himself; for never does he put his hand upon his sword-hilt to strike it but straightway it bounds forward. His touch, so far from paralysing it, communicates new life to it. Let us mark how all things work in the reverse order, and establish the very thing which the emperor wishes to overthrow. Of this the Edict of Worms is a striking example. It was promulgated in the confident hope that it would effect the extinction of Protestantism: it becomes, on the contrary, one of the main means of establishing it. Each successive attempt to enforce that edict only resulted in lifting up Protestantism to a higher platform. The first effort made to execute it, in 1521, sent Luther to the Wartburg. No greater service could any one have done the Reformation at that hour. The Reformer is out of sight indeed, but only to do a most essential work. A few months elapse, and the German Bible is seen at the hearths of the German people.

The second attempt to put this edict in force at the Diet of Nuremberg, 1522, evoked the "Hundred Grievances" of the German nation. This was a second great advance, inasmuch as it identified the Protestant movement with the cause of Germany's independence. The third attempt, at the Diet of Nuremberg, 1524, to enforce the edict led to the virtual toleration of Protestantism. All that the princes could promise the emperor was that they would execute his decree against the Reformer if possible, but they had previously declared that this was not possible. Thus, under the tutelage of Protestantism a public opinion had been formed so powerful as to bring the imperial authority into a dead-lock.

The fourth attempt to execute the Edict of Worms, made at the Diet of Spires, 1526, led to another most important concession to the Reformers. The virtual toleration of Protestantism by the previous Diet was now changed into a legal toleration, the princes agreeing by a majority of votes that, till a General Council should assemble; the States should take order about religion as each might judge right. Yet another attempt, the fifth, to enforce the edict, was made at the Diet of Spires, 1529. This most of all was helpful to it, for it evoked the famous Protest of the Lutheran princes. Protestantism had now become the public creed of the princes, States, and Churches of one

half of Germany. It was idle longer to talk of the Edict of Worms; from this time forward Protestantism, could be suppressed only at the cost of a civil war.

Nevertheless, the emperor did make another attempt, the sixth, to execute the redoubtable edict, which so far had been formidable only to himself. Charles had just triumphed over the "Holy League," and sealed his new alliance with the Pope by the promise of turning the whole influence of his policy, and should that not suffice, the whole force of his arms, to the extermination of Protestantism. In order to fulfill that promise he convokes the Diet of Augsburg, 1530, and goes thither in person to make sure that this time his project shall not miscarry. It is now that he puts the top-stone upon the fabric which he had hoped to raze. The Augsburg Confession, prepared in prospect of this assembly, and read before the emperor and the Diet, formed the culmination of the German Reformation. Protestantism in Germany was now in its zenith; it shone with a splendor it had never before and has never since attained. Thus at every new attempt to put the ban of the Empire in motion in order to crush Luther and extirpate Protestantism, it recoils on the throne of Charles himself. The sword unsheathed at Worms in 1521, instead of dealing the fatal stroke to the great movement which the man who drew it forth most firmly believed it would, becomes the instrument to open the Reformation's way through innumerable difficulties, and lead it on step by step to its consummation and glory.

[622] Protestantism, then, is no petty cause which stole upon the stage of the world at this supreme hour, and which, intruding itself unbidden and without occasion amongst the great affairs of kings and emperors, was unable from its insignificance to make its influence be felt on the great issues then being determined. This is the only position which some historians of name have been able to find for it. According to them, Charles is the great master-spirit of the age; his battles are the great events that constitute its history; and his closet is the source and spring of all those influences that are changing the world, and molding the destinies of the nations. How superficial this view is we need not say. Our history has lifted the veil, and placed us in presence of a mightier Power. Protestantism is the master; Charles is but the servant. It is as Protestantism wins that he sheathes or unsheathes the sword, that he makes peace or war: and

as it is to serve its interests so is the emperor lifted up or cast down; so are his arms made resplendent with victory, or darkened with disaster and defeat. All men and things exist for the Reformation. It is this Power that originates, that controls, and that extorts the service of all around it. Every one who has eyes to see, and a heart to understand, must acknowledge that Protestantism stands at the very center of the field, lifting its head king-like above all other actors, and looking serenely down upon the hosts of its foes. It girds itself with no weapons of war, it leads forth no armed hosts, it brandishes no battle-axe in its defense; yet it alone is safe. The lightnings flash, but their bolts pass without striking it. The thunder-cloud gathers, but rolls away and bursts in another quarter of the sky. The Powers that struggle and fight around it are smitten, one after another, first with decadence and in the end with ruin; but this grand cause is seen marching steadily onward to triumph. France is humiliated; her sovereign's head is bowed on the field of Pavia, not again to be lifted up with the knightly grace that adorned it of yore. A sudden bolt lays the glory of Rome in the dust, and the queen-like beauty then marred is fated nevermore to flourish in the same high degree. The mighty Empire of Charles V. is shattered by the rude shocks it sustains, and before going to the tomb that monarch is destined to see that consumption of the Spanish power setting in which was to continue till Spain should become the frightful wreck which we behold it at this day. But as regards Protestantism, its progress is liker that of a monarch going to be crowned. Every step carries it into a wider arena, and every year lifts it to a higher platform, till at length on the 25th of June, 1530, the crowning honour is placed on its brow, in presence of the assembled puissances, spiritual and temporal, of the Empire, with the emperor at their head, who, here to assist at its obsequies, becomes the unintentional witness of its triumph.

The characteristic of the Reformation as distinguished from primitive Christianity was its power of originating social action. It put forth on nations an influence of a kind so powerful that nothing like it is to be found in any previous age of the world. As the Gospel, in early times, held on its way among the nations, it called one individual here and another there to be its disciple. Those whom it thus gathered out of the mass it knit into a holy brotherhood, an

evangelical Church. Still, though a great multitude, comprehending men of every kindred and tongue, these disciples remained blended with their several nationalities: they did not stand out before the world as a distinct social and Political community. They were a spiritual kingdom only. When the magistrate permitted them the open profession of their faith, they thankfully accepted the privilege; when they were denied it, they were content to die for the Gospel: they never thought of combining to demand as a right the open and unchallenged profession of their faith.

But the Reformation, by quickening and evolving the social instinct in man, brought with it a new order of things. It gave birth not merely to regenerated individuals, like primitive Christianity, but to regenerated societies. No doubt the Gospel in the sixteenth century began where the Gospel in the first century had begun, with the renewal even of the individual; but it did not end there. It called bodies corporate into being, it communicated to them the idea of social rights, and supplied an organization for the acquisition and the exercise of these rights. The Reformation thus erected a platform on which it was possible to develop a higher civilization, and achieve a more perfect liberty, than the human race had yet known. Even leaving out of view the Christian graces, which formed of course the basis of that civilization, the civic virtues now shot up into a stature, and blazed forth with a splendor, which far transcended anything of the kind that Greece and Rome had witnessed in their short-lived heroic age. Where-ever the Reformation came, the world seemed to be peopled with a new race. Fired with the love of liberty, and with the yet more sacred love of truth, men performed deeds which brightened the lands in which they were done with their glory. Whatever country it made its home it ennobled by its valor, enriched by its industry, and sanctified by its virtues. The fens of Holland, the mountains of Switzerland, and the straths of Scotland became its seat, and straightway, though till now rude and barbarous, these regions were illumined with a glory brighter than that which letters and arms had shed on Italy and France. There it converted burghers and artisans, weavers and tillers of the soil into heroes and martyrs. Such was the new life which the Reformation gave, and such the surprising and hitherto unknown transformations which it wrought on the world.

Under the Reformation society attained its manhood. The manhood of the individual Christian was reached under primitive Christianity, but the manhood of society was not realized till the Reformation came. Till that time society was under tutors and governors. Despotism flourished previous to that epoch, as being the only form of government compatible in those ages with the peace and good order of States. Till the Reformation permeated nations with the Gospel, they had absolutely no basis for freedom. The two great necessities of States are liberty and order. The Gospel is the only power known to man that can bestow these two indispensable gifts. Atheism, by emancipating the conscience from superstitious thralldom, can give liberty, but in giving liberty it destroys order. Despotism and superstition can give order, but in maintaining order they extinguish liberty. But Christianity gives both. Inasmuch as it sets free the conscience, it gives liberty; and inasmuch as it rules the conscience, it maintains order. Thus the Reformation, making the influence of the Bible operative over the whole domain of society, was the first to plant in nations a basis for freedom; and along with liberty and order it bestowed the capacity of a terrestrial immortality. The nations of antiquity, after a short career of splendor and crime, followed each other to the grave. If atheism did not precipitate them into anarchy, and so cause them to perish in their own violence, superstition held them in her chains till they sunk in rottenness and disappeared from the earth. The balance, in their case, was ever being lost between the restraint which conscience imposes and the liberty which knowledge gives, and its loss was ever followed by the penalty of death; but the Gospel is able to maintain that balance for ever, and so to confer on nations a terrestrial, even as it confers on the individual a celestial, immortality.

History is just a second Bible, with this difference, that it is written, not like the first in letters, but in great facts. The letters and the facts, however, are charged with the same meaning. In the first Bible-that written in letters-the Creator has made known the attributes of his character, and the great principles on which he conducts his government of his creatures; and he has warned nations that, if they would aspire to greatness and seek to be happy, they must base their power on the principles of truth and righteousness on which he rules the world. In harmony with his government theirs

cannot be otherwise than stable and prosperous; but if they place themselves in opposition to it, by adopting as their fundamental and guiding maxims those principles which he has condemned, they will inevitably, sooner or later, come into collision with his omnipotent and righteous rule, and be broken in pieces by the shock and ground to powder. This great truth we read in the one Bible in words plain and unmistakable; we read it in the other in those beacons of warning and examples for imitation that rise on every side of us—in this nation overthrown, and covered with the darkness of ruin; in that seated on the foundations of truth, and rising sublime with the lights of liberty and morality shining around it.

Five lines, or five words, may suffice to announce a great principle; but five centuries or ten centuries may pass away before a nation has made full proof of the truth or the falsehood of that principle. The nation selects it as its corner-stone; it frames its law and policy according to it; its national spirit and action are simply the development of that principle; it goes on, working out its problem, for centuries; the end comes at last; the nation rises, we shall suppose, to wealth, to liberty, to renown; how manifest is it that the principle was true, and that in selecting it the nation chose “the better part!” Or it brings disaster, disgrace, and overthrow; equally manifest is it that the principle was false, and that in selecting it the nation chose “the worse part.”

Let us take an instance illustrating each side of the principle. Spain fallen from the summit of power, her sierras treeless and flowerless, her plains a desert, her towns hastening to decay, her people steeped in ignorance, in poverty, and in barbarism, proclaims the supreme folly of which she was guilty when she chose to rest her greatness upon a conscience governed by the inquisition.

Britain, the seat of law, the sanctuary of justice, the fountain of knowledge, the emporium of commerce, and the bulwark of order and liberty, proclaims not less emphatically the wisdom of her choice when she made her first requisite a conscience emancipated and guided by the Bible.

Providence ever sends its instructors into the world, as the first preachers of Christianity were sent into it, by twos. Here have we Spain and Britain, the two great instructors of the world. They differ in that each is representative of a different principle; but they agree

in that each teaches, the one negatively and the other positively, the self-same lesson to mankind. They are a tree of the knowledge of good and evil to the nations, as really as was the tree in the midst of the garden of old. How manifest is it that a fertilising dew has descended upon the one, and that a silent malediction has smitten the other! The Mount Ebal of Christendom, with the curse upon its top, stands over against the Mount Gerizim, from whose summit the blessing, like a star, beams out before the nations. [624]

With history's page open before us, we have verily no need that one should demonstrate to us that there is a God, and that the Bible is a revelation of his character and will. The latter truth is continually receiving authentication and fulfillment in acts of righteousness and dispensations of terror for what are the annals of the world and the chronicles of the race but a translation into fact of the laws and principles made known in Holy Writ? God in no age, and in no land, leaves himself without a witness. The facts of history are the testimony of his being, and the proof of his Word. They are the never-ceasing echo of that awful Voice, which at the very dawn of national history proclaimed the attributes of the Divine character, and the principles of the Divine government, from the top of Sinai. In history that Voice is speaking still.