

CHAPTER IX

LUTHER'S SOJOURN AT THE WARTBURG

I. STORMS WITHIN AND WITHOUT

At the Wartburg, Luther vested himself in the costume of a cavalier and allowed his beard and hair to grow. In order to conceal his identity, he assumed the name of Squire George (Ritter Görg). He wrote to Melanchthon at Wittenberg that he would not recognize him if he were to meet him. On the tenth day of his stay, he says in a letter to Spalatin: "I sit idle here the livelong day and eat more than enough." But soon he found an occupation; for in the same letter he says: "I read the Bible in Greek and Hebrew. I shall write a German sermon on the freedom of auricular confession; I shall continue my commentaries on the Psalms and my sermons as soon as the necessary materials arrive from Wittenberg. From there I also expect to obtain the Magnificat which I have begun."¹ He did not carry out all these plans, however. But the period of quiet retirement became for him a time of gigantic labors, chiefly devoted to a direct attack upon the teachings and the power of Antichrist, whose determined opposition to the Gospel he believed to have experienced at Worms. In one of his first letters we hear: "While I quietly sojourn here, I contemplate the face of the Church all day, and hear the voice of the Psalmist raised to God: Why hast Thou made all the children of men in vain? (Ps. lxxxviii, 48). O God, what a horrible monster of divine wrath is this execrable empire of the Roman Antichrist. I curse the hardness of my heart, since I do not completely dissolve in tears because of the murdered sons of my people."²

The frame of mind expressed in these rhetorical words to Melanchthon, continued during the ten months of his sojourn at the

¹ *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 154; May 14, 1521.

² *Ibid.*, p. 148; letter to Melanchthon, May 12.

Wartburg. It was there he was to receive, as it were, his spiritual baptism in preparation for his future work.

His room at the Wartburg was an unpretentious cell, situated not within the castle itself, but in the outbuildings set apart for ordinary guests. He had no elevating outlook upon the green mountains, which some biographers picture him contemplating from his room. Nor was his cell equipped with the oft-admired bay-window, which was added to the corner room only about a century ago. The room, which is much frequented to-day, is reached by ascending a steep, narrow flight of stairs. It is stocked with numerous souvenirs of doubtful authenticity. There "Squire George," secluded from intercourse with others, was attended by servants of the castle. The castle itself made a rather unfavorable impression, its upkeep having been neglected for a long time. The bare walls harmonized with the disposition of the new inmate. A priest conducted divine services for the castellan and a few domestics and rare guests. Luther avoided the society of the "mass-priest." At times he participated in the chase, more for the sake of appearances than for diversion.

So secretly kept was his seclusion, that even for months afterwards but few knew of his whereabouts. Many supposed that he had been abducted by his enemies, others that he had been assassinated. Among those who anxiously desired information about him was Albrecht Dürer, the famous painter, who was on intimate terms with Pirkheimer, Luther's patron at Nuremberg, and favorably disposed towards the reforms which Luther had promised, without as yet realizing the full import of his religious changes.³

During the first few days of his sojourn at the Wartburg, Luther was very much concerned over reports of violence at Erfurt. In his opinion, the demonstrations in his behalf were going too far. On the day following his departure from Erfurt, which he visited on his journey to Worms, he heard that the students, assisted by a mob, had risen against the canons of the church of St. Severin, who were loyal to their faith, and had stormed the dwellings of the canons, committing all kinds of excesses. These scenes were reenacted with the permission of the academic senate and the authorities on several days in June. Fundamentally Luther himself had furnished the cause of these demonstrations by the hatred which he had aroused against the Catholics at Erfurt. This same hatred burst

³ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 39, 41 sq.

forth anew when the clergy, who had participated in the festive reception in honor of Luther, were threatened with exclusion from choral service and from their benefices because they had also become subject to the edict of outlawry. Luther deplored the whole violent movement in a letter to Wittenberg: "This kind of procedure will bring our Gospel into disrepute and justly bring about its repudiation. . . . Satan attempts to mock our endeavors."⁴ His Gospel, however, was exposed to other and still greater annoyances from without. In the meantime he sought relief from his own mental storms by resorting to controversy.

During the first two months of his sojourn at the Wartburg, his lengthy reply to Ambrosius Catharinus was printed.⁵ In comparison with his previous writings, this reply was especially striking on account of the visionary application of the real or apparent Biblical passages concerning Antichrist. In the application of these texts to his idea of the papacy, he indulges in a kind of dreamy fanaticism. In his opinion the prophet Daniel (viii, 28) had definitely foretold the different characteristics of Antichrist which were realized in the pope. The enemy of God, according to Luther's (false) translation of Daniel, has different "faces," which are all discoverable in minute detail in anti-Christian Rome. According to Daniel, he held, the spirit out of the mouth of God, not force and human fury, will kill Antichrist and that within a brief space; for the Lord and His day are nigh. This work was intended to be that production of which his tract on the Babylonian Captivity was the prelude. Undoubtedly it is representative of the mental excitement with which Luther was seized at the Wartburg.

During his first week at the castle, he composed his treatise *Von der Beicht* ("On Confession—Whether the Pope has Power to Impose it"). It was dedicated on June 1 to Franz von Sickingen as his "special lord and patron."⁶ Confession, as imposed by the papacy, he asserts therein, is an unauthorized and insidious institution, whereas private confession made to anyone, even to a layman, if entirely voluntary, is a "precious and wholesome thing," because of the humiliation it involves and the comfort produced by the consolatory words of one's fellowman. Absolution received in this manner alone

⁴ *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 158; letter to Melanchthon, about the middle of May.

⁵ *Werke*, Weimar ed., VII, pp. 705 sqq.; Erl. ed., *Opp. Lat. Var.*, V, pp. 289 sqq.

⁶ *Werke*, Weimar ed., VIII, pp. 138 sqq.; Erl. ed., XXVII, pp. 318 sqq.

corresponds with the liberty of a Christian. In general, no one may be compelled to receive the Sacraments, just as no one may be or can be compelled to accept the faith.

It is not likely that Sickingen went to excess either in receiving the Sacrament of Penance or free lay-confession. His two castles in the Palatinate, Ebernburg and Landstuhl, were asylums for the friends of the new religious movement and the revolution. Elected captain of the "Fraternal Union of Knighthood," in August, 1522, he declared war against the Archbishop of Treves, Richard von Greiffenklau, and, after an unsuccessful attack upon his episcopal city, devastated the district about Treves and portions of the Palatinate. In May of the succeeding year, Sickingen succumbed to the wounds he had sustained at the siege and capture of his fortress Landstuhl by the princes who had allied themselves against him.

In his reply to Catharinus, Luther had interpreted one of the "faces" of the supposed Antichrist (Daniel, ch. ix) as referring to the papal universities. These high schools of Satan, he alleged, are the waters of the bottomless pit described in the Apocalypse, whence locusts with the power of scorpions issue as in a thick smoke. In 1518, a book had been issued against him by the University of Louvain, which Luther declared to be the most thorough and the most dangerous of all the works written against him. Its author was the erudite theologian James Latomus (Masson). In the twelve days intervening between June 8 and 20, Luther composed a reply to Latomus, entitled, *Rationis Latomiana Confutatio*,⁷ wherein he attempts to refute the Catholic doctrine of sin and grace by citations from the Bible, no other aids being available to him at the time. A pronouncement made against his heresies by the theological faculty of Paris he tried to dispose of by publishing a translation of this document, accompanied by a preface and an epilogue.⁸ He denounces the faculty, which had been the glory of the Middle Ages, as "the greatest spiritual harlot under the sun and the back-door to hell."⁹ Again he indulges his mania concerning the Antichrist and the end of the world. The faculty is the sinful chamber "of the pope, the true Antichrist." "When the belly of these gentlemen of Paris rumbles," etc., they exclaim: "It is an article of faith." Their actions

⁷ Weim. ed., VIII, pp. 43 sqq.; *Opp. Lat. Var.*, V, pp. 395 sqq.

⁸ Weimar ed., VIII, pp. 267 sqq.; Erl. ed., XXVII, pp. 379 sqq.

⁹ At the end of the publication.

are to him an additional proof that the "pope has not regarded us otherwise than as unworthy to be . . . his privy, etc. . . . So many noble-minded persons have been obliged to harbor the stench, dung, and filth," etc. His crudities are not deserving of full quotation.

It is worth while, however, to mention here the works which Luther composed during his brief sojourn at the Wartburg; particular reference will be made to some of them in the sequel. They are: the *Verhandlungen zu Worms* ("Transactions at Worms"); two treatises against monastic vows; two against the Mass; the interpretation of the Magnificat; a "Warning" against rebellion; a discourse on the "Bull Caena Domini"; an illustrated "Passional of Christ and Anti-christ," for which he was responsible at least in part; a Christmas postil, and other explanations of Biblical texts, besides smaller polemical tracts, and, finally, his translation of the New Testament. Surely no small amount of labor. Aided by Spalatin, Melanchthon, and other friends, he entrusted the publication of his works to the Wittenberg press.

What a contrast between the tender and charitable activity of the sainted princess whose memory the Wartburg preserved and Luther's agitated labors, sustained mainly by strong hatred, passion, and a slanderous disposition. St. Elizabeth with her loving heart for the poor, with her loyal devotion to the Church, and her soul aglow with prayer, everywhere confronted the man of the violent pen within the castle-walls. There was the *Kemenate* where she had her quarters, still in a state of beautiful preservation; there was the richly adorned chapel, her favorite retreat; there, rising heavenward above the court, was the tower whence she so often contemplated the splendor of her celestial home in the mirror of nature.

The letters he wrote to his friends cast a lurid light upon Luther's frame of mind in the intervals between his oppressive labors. Anyone who reads them would be greatly disillusioned had he expected that the solitude which came to him as an extraordinary grace from above would have induced Luther to reflect seriously upon himself or to examine quietly his activities which were fraught with so much responsibility. Prayers, indeed, there are, brief and ardent prayers, for himself and against his adversaries; but we miss the principal prayer, the petition for complete submission to the divine will and the expression of willingness to be led anywhere, even to the abandonment

of his struggle, if it were God's will.¹⁰ Instead of "Thy will be done" one hears everywhere "My will be done"; so that the resignation of the soul to God, which Luther had so strongly emphasized in the days of his so-called mysticism, now seems to be forgotten in a cause so decisive for himself and for thousands of others. God should, nay He must, so Luther thinks, place the seal of His approval upon his revolt from the entire past of the Church.

Luther had to suffer much from temptations. These were always combated by devout Catholics by prayer accompanied by penance, but no mention is made of penitential practices in the case of Luther. He himself acknowledged his deficiency in the matter of prayer.¹¹

"Alas, I pray too little instead of sighing over the Church of God. . . . For a whole week I have neither written, prayed nor studied, plagued partly by temptations of the flesh, partly by the other trouble [constipation]. Pray for me, for in this solitude I am sinking into sin."

A previous passage in this same letter says: "I burn with the flames of my untamed flesh; in short, I ought to be glowing in the spirit, and instead I glow in the flesh, in lust, laziness, idleness and drowsiness, and know not whether God has not turned away His face from me, because you have ceased to pray for me."

A little later he writes: "I am healthy in body and am well cared for, but I am also severely tried by sin and temptations. Pray for me, and fare you well!"¹²

Here, at all events, powerful sexual temptations (*ferveo carne, libidine*, etc.) are openly acknowledged. As early as 1519, he had written to his superior Staupitz concerning such visitations (*titillationes*).¹³ These assaults at the Wartburg, however are disagreeable to him. His self-revelations are somewhat inflated by his habitually superlative style of writing; and he may have referred the "sins" which he mentions to sensuality, on the one hand, and, on the other, to the frailty of his fiduciary faith in God, which he made the center

¹⁰ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. VI, pp. 511 sq.; more fully in the original German edition, Vol. III, pp. 995 sqq.

¹¹ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 82 sq.; cfr. V, pp. 225 sqq., letter to Melanchthon, July 13, 1521.

¹² *Op. cit.*, II, p. 83; letter to Lang, December 18, 1521.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 319 sqq.

of his Gospel. The devil, so he believed, ever and anon sought to deprive him of this faith.

Luther saw the Wartburg filled with devils. This, in part, was the result of the fear of demons which he had imbibed in his youth; while in part it was a consequence of the inquietude caused by his internal doubts and self-reproaches. The voices of self-reproach he imagined to be voices from the Satanic empire.

"Believe me," he wrote on November 1, "that I am cast before a thousand devils in this idle solitude. It is much easier to struggle with men, even if they be incarnate devils, than with the spirits of iniquity that infest the air. I fall, but the right hand of God sustains me."¹⁴

According to another utterance of his, he wishes to praise God in the name of his Gospel,—God who has not only given us this combat with the spirits of iniquity, but has also revealed to us [*revelavit nobis*] that in this matter it is not flesh and blood that take the field against us. . . . It is Satan, who rages against us according to his way and within his limits."

Thus convinced of his great struggle against the evil spirits, he discovers, in his own imagination, that they become visible and audible to him, as will be shown in the following pages.

Meanwhile we must mention the internal struggle which he sustained when he had persuaded himself of the invalidity, nay, absolute reprehensibility of the monastic vows and the vow of celibacy. It was a violent struggle. Hitherto he had adhered to his monastic vow of chastity as a matter of principle, but now his false idea of Christian liberty began to seduce him to break his vow.

Bartholomew Feldkirch (Bernhardi), provost of Kronberg, was the first, or one of the first adherents of Luther among the clergy who married during the time of Luther's sojourn at the Wartburg.¹⁵ Karlstadt, Luther's tumultuous theological colleague at Wittenberg, had published a tract against the vows. Not long afterwards, he, too, took unto himself a wife. When Luther first heard of the movement to permit the inmates of monasteries to marry, he was somewhat taken aback and wrote to Spalatin: "O God, shall the Wittenbergers give wives to the monks! But they shall not force a wife

¹⁴ On November 1, 1521, in a letter to Nicholas Gerbel; *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 240: "*Mille credas me Satanibus obiectum in bac otiosa solitudine. . . . Saepius ego cado, sed sustentat me rursus dextra Excelsi.*"

¹⁵ Bernhardi is known to us through his part in the Wittenberg disputation of 1516.

upon me."¹⁶ He found very many grounds for criticizing the treatise of Karlstadt, especially its method of demonstration. Melanchthon, too, who opposed the monastic vows, had not hit upon the right solution in Luther's opinion. His own fermenting soul now embraced the question, with no intention of dismissing it until the right solution, or rather the least disquieting disposition of the duty of the vows had been found. On August 3, he revealed the state of his mind in a painful discussion with his friend Melanchthon: "You see with what heat I burn [*quantis urgeor æstibus*], and yet I cannot confirm any satisfactory conclusion except that I greatly desire to support your efforts."¹⁷

As was to be foreseen, however, he soon discovered what he sought. The solution was destined to bring him what he desired, an influx of male and female members of monastic Orders who had grown tired of their vows. He resolved to liberate these "unfortunates" from the "impure and damnable state of celibacy," as he styles it, and to induct them into the "paradise of matrimony."¹⁸ This solution also afforded the advantage to make him independent of his rival Karlstadt, and furthermore, to enable him to watch over the "firstfruits of the spirit" also in this matter. The point of departure was furnished by his idea of evangelical liberty. "Whoever has taken a vow in a spirit opposed to evangelical freedom"—thus he sets forth his saving idea—"must be set free, and his vow be anathema. Such, however, are all those who have taken the vow in the search for salvation or justification."¹⁹ In this spirit all religious, including himself, had taken their vows. This spirit was inseparable from the vow as long as good works were regarded as efficacious; for the voluntary relinquishment of freedom, offered at the throne of the Most High, is always connected with the certain expectation, guaranteed by the Word of God, that the sacrifice will assist in the attainment of salvation and justification, through the merits of Jesus Christ whom the person who takes the vow promises to follow in humility.

For the sake of advancing his new discovery, Luther first wrote "theses" intended "for the bishops and deacons of the church of Wittenberg."²⁰ These were followed by his momentous work *Ueber*

¹⁶ On August 6, 1521; *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 215.

¹⁷ *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 213.

¹⁸ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 83 sqq.

¹⁹ Letter to Melanchthon, *op. cit.* II, 84.

²⁰ Weimar ed., VIII, pp. 323 sqq.; *Opp. Lat. Var.*, IV, pp. 344 sqq.

die Ordensgelübde, ein Urteil Martin Luthers ("On the Monastic Vows: an Opinion of Martin Luther.")²¹ It abounds in misrepresentations of the monastic life and the Catholic teaching concerning perfection, good works, and penance as well as in frivolous indecencies and vulgar calumnies. The author prefaced the book with a dedicatory letter to his father, in order to invest it with an attractive foil of personal experience. His father, he writes, should not be angry at him because, by entering a monastery, he had violated the grave commandment of obedience to parents. He now realized that his vow was worthless, for God had released him from his fetters.

Desertion of the monasteries amid strife and tumult such as, for instance, his friend Lang at Erfurt had proposed, Luther at that time censured. Concerning himself, he announced his intention of adhering to his present mode of life. He wore the habit of his Order for several years after his sojourn at the Wartburg.

2. GHOSTS AND ILLUSIONS

Whilst Luther was engaged in the composition of his last-mentioned book, he announced to Spalatin: "I am suffering from temptation, and out of temper; so don't be offended. There is more than one Satan contending with me. I am alone, and yet at times not alone."²² He believed that he was visibly pursued by infernal powers because of his praiseworthy discoveries. His intimate friend, the physician Mattheus Ratzeberger, quotes Luther as saying that, "Because he was so lonely, he was beset with ghosts and noisy spirits which gave him much concern, and he drove them all away by prayer; but did not wish to talk about it."²³

Nevertheless Luther in his later Table Talks expressed his firm conviction that he had encountered the visible Satan. Both Ratzeberger and Luther make mention of the devil's assuming the form of a dog.²⁴ A big black bull-dog resisted him one night as he was about to go to bed, and departed only after Luther had recited a verse of

²¹ Weimar ed., VIII, pp. 573-669; *Opp. Lat. Var.*, VI, pp. 238-376; Denifle, in *Luther und Luthertum*, has subjected the Latin text to a searching and extensive criticism. Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, II, pp. 83 sqq. On the question of Christian perfection and the alleged dual ideal of life fostered by Catholicism, see *op. cit.*, II, 85, Note 3.

²² Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 85.

²³ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 82.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 123; Köstlin-Kawerau, *M. Luther*, Vol. I, p. 440.

the Psalms. According to Luther's own story, he seized the dog and threw him out of the window. He states that there was no such dog at the Wartburg. On another occasion he was disturbed at night by a sack of hazel-nuts, locked in a chest, which by the power of the evil one were thrown one after another against the rafters of his room, while his bed was violently jolted. At the same time a rumbling noise was heard on the staircase, as if barrels were being rolled down. And yet, the staircase, as Luther convinced himself, was locked below with bolts and chains.²⁵ Thus, as Mathesius assures us, "he often heard the rumbling noises of the evil spirit at night in his Patmos [*i. e.*, at the Wartburg]." It was frequently a struggle, he continues, like Christ's, when He was tempted in the desert. When he changed his quarters to accommodate the wife of Hans Berlips, she heard such an ado in the room that she fancied a thousand devils were in it." Luther himself reports that "at Eisenach" (*i. e.*, probably at the Wartburg) he had contemptuously called to the devil on such an occasion: "If you are Christ's master, so be it!" "I have learned by experience," he says elsewhere, "that ghosts go about affrightening people, preventing them from sleeping and so making them ill."

But he experienced not only tribulations, but also consolation and encouragement from the world beyond.

"Ten years ago," he said (1532) to his pupil Schlaginhaufen, "God strengthened me in my struggles and writings through His angels." The period thus indicated probably refers to the months he spent at the Wartburg. Perhaps the vision with which his pupils were acquainted also happened at this time. While he, engaged in the service of the Word—thus the story runneth—was praying in his chamber, the image of Christ bearing the five wounds, appeared to him in shining splendor. However, as he was in doubt, thinking it might be the evil spirit, he said: "Begone, thou infamous devil," whereat the image forthwith disappeared. For some definite reason, Luther disliked to indulge in such narratives, because the fanatics, his enemies, piqued themselves on their enlightenment and revelations, instead of abiding by the Biblical texts as propounded by Luther. He did not look favorably upon communications from the other world. If, nevertheless, he exploited his own experiences in terms such as the follow-

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 124. This and the next pages of my larger work also furnish the evidence for the following incidents.

ing, their significance is all the more enhanced. "Ah, bah, spirits!" he exclaims, "I too have seen spirits!"

He had other similar experiences both before and after his sojourn at the Wartburg.

His mind was naturally receptive to such experiences. Even as a monk, when he studied at night in the refectory preparing to become a professor, he heard the devil rustling about in the wood-bin, and again later on in his room at the monastery. "The devil," he says, "often had me by the hair of my head, yet was ever forced to let me go." He claims to have seen "grewsome ghosts and visions" from time to time in the monastery, and "no one was able to comfort" him. More important is the following report. In the course of official business with Gregory Casel, a delegate of the reformed theologians of Strasburg, in 1525, Luther assured him that, while in the monastery, he "frequently had inward experience that the body of Christ is indeed in the Sacrament" (a dogma which the Zwinglians did not believe); that he had seen dreadful visions, also angels (*se angelos vidisse*), so that he had been obliged to stop saying Mass." "What do the Strasburgers mean with their alleged ghost?" he asks. "Are they alone in possession of it? But particularly, have they experienced the terrors of death which I have been through (*mortis horrorem expertus*)?"

Luther's visionary experiences cannot be doubted. They were gross imaginings of preternatural annoyances and corroborations, misinterpretations of internal and external experiences which are well established, particularly for the period he spent at the Wartburg. He named the castle his Patmos, evidently because it was there that he, like the Apostle John when in exile on the isle of Patmos, had preternatural experiences. His extremely active imagination rendered him very susceptible to hallucinations and illusions, especially when accompanied by precordialgia, a physical ailment from which he frequently suffered, or by severe constipation, to which he was also subject at times, and of which he complains at the Wartburg, or when his nerves were overwrought in consequence of excessive literary labors.

The enlightenment which he imagined to have received, naturally revolved about his divine vocation as herald of the new gospel. Thus Luther, for all future time, received his spiritual baptism at his Patmos. The most precious "first-fruits of the spirit" (*primitiae spiritus*,

as he calls them), were allotted to him there.²⁶ He says, apparently in allusion to a mysterious event relative to his doctrine: "Under threat of the curse of eternal wrath, I have been found worthy in no manner to doubt these things" (*fui dignus, cui sub aeternæ iræ maledictione interminaretur, ne ullo modo de iis dubitarem*).²⁷ How then, in Luther's imagination, was it possible that the devil should not have opposed his election?

Legend has expanded this struggle with the devil. There is no certain warrant for the report of the apparition which in time has come to be the most popular of the Wartburg tales. Luther nowhere says that he hurled the ink-well at the devil, nor do his pupils mention the incident. The famous spot on the wall is unattested, and its historicity is not confirmed by the fact that it has constantly been retouched, whenever the devotion of relic-hunters had gradually scraped it off. Such spots, all originating from an ink-well which Luther hurled at his satanic majesty, were formerly to be found also in other places, e. g., in the rooms which Luther occupied in Wittenberg and at the Koburg.²⁸

3. "PECCA FORTITER." THE MASS

The famous expression, "Sin boldly, but believe more boldly still,"²⁹ which Luther embodied in a letter written from the Wartburg to his friend Melanchthon, under date of August 1, 1521, is to

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 116.

²⁷ The passage is now to be found in *Tischreden*, Weimar ed., IV, No. 4852, among the Table Talks of the Khumer collection, July, 1543, and is reproduced as a copy from Luther's *Psalter*. Luther wrote in almost identical terms to his friend Jonas, when the latter was ill in 1540 and "in the greatest temptation," introducing his letter as follows: "*Contra tentationem indignitatis nostrae sic respondendum est diabolo*" (Weimar ed., *l. c.*, note). He wished to indicate to his frightened friend, how he quieted himself. The possible relation to a single experience of Luther is made clear by the connection of the longer passage: "*Martinus Lutterus indignus sum, sed dignus fui creari a creatore meo, dignus fui redimi a Filio Dei, dignus fui doceri a Filio Dei et Spiritu sancto, dignus fui, cui ministerium verbi crederetur, dignus fui, qui pro eo tanta paterer, dignus fui, qui in toto malis servarer, dignus fui, cui praeciperetur ista credere, dignus fui, cui sub aeternae,*" etc. Aurifaber thus reproduced the conclusion: "[Yet I am worthy] that I ought by no means to doubt it, I who have been severely threatened and enjoined by the wrath of God, His displeasure and execration." (Weim. ed., *l. c.*) Luther's idea that God was leading him into hell, in order to assure him of his salvation, seems to have arisen from an "experience" made by him at a certain juncture of his life.

²⁸ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 96.

²⁹ *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 208; Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 194 sqq.; M. Pribilla, article "Pecca fortiter" in the *Stimmen der Zeit*, 1924, Vol. CVII, pp. 391 sqq.

be ascribed to his strong prepossession in favor of his theory of salvation by "faith alone." This paradoxical aphorism was not, as has frequently been assumed, a command to commit sin, against which Luther always wrote and preached, but a very offensive hyperbolical expression of the certitude, inculcated by him, that faith in a merciful God suffices to obtain pardon for all sins, provided that faith in God is "boldly" asserted.

It seems that Melanchthon, who was spiritually weaker than Luther, was afflicted by the fear of sin. Luther, in his robust way, wished to rid him of this fear and hence reminds him that he is "a preacher of grace" who should not occupy his mind with imaginary sins, but rejoice in Christ, the conqueror of sin; for sins are inevitable in this life. Sin, he says in one of his strongest expressions, will "not tear us away" from the pardoning mercy of the Lamb of God, "even if we should have committed fornication and murder a thousand times in one day." Then he arrives at the notorious expression: "God does not save those who merely fancy themselves sinners. Be a sinner, and sin boldly, but believe more boldly still" (*Esto peccator et pecca fortiter, sed fortius fide*). In the context the phrase "sin boldly" conveys a sinister impression, involving as it does, fundamentally, a strong self-condemnation of the Lutheran theory of fiduciary faith and justification. In lieu of interior contrition, self-humiliation and the penitential spirit, justification is made dependent upon the presumptuous apprehension of the merits of Christ, and sin loses its terrifying character for the believer. Möhler rightly detects in these offensive words "an evident mental derangement." It is to be noted, however, that Luther used similar language also on other occasions, for example, abstracting from other instances at the beginning of his reformatory career, in his letter to Spenlein (1518) and, shortly before his death in his extraordinary letter of 1544 to Spalatin, who had become melancholy. The offensive "*pecca fortiter*" flows naturally from his whole system of doctrine.³⁰

After Melanchthon had concluded his lectures on the Epistle to Titus, the Gospel of St. Matthew, and the Epistle to the Romans, he was transferred to the theological faculty of Wittenberg and there not only continued his philological labors, but also undertook a theological work, entitled *Loci Communes*, which was destined to be a pillar for the support of the Lutheran doctrine. The work was com-

³⁰ Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 194 sqq.

pleted in December, 1521, and appeared in sixteen editions before 1525. The Latinity of the book is classical, but its theology clearly betrays the lay-theologian completely enchanted by the new doctrine. The author pretends that, following in the path of Luther, he must re-create the system of theology, after the greatest minds of the centuries had supposedly labored in vain on it. Among other things he teaches that all things happen of necessity (*necessario eveniunt*) in accordance with divine predestination, and that the human will is not free. He gives a decidedly affirmative answer to the question whether God is also the author of moral evil.³¹ Luther was delighted with the precious work, which mirrored forth himself. He termed it an "unconquered work," which, in his opinion, deserved not only immortality, but also to be received into the canon of the Bible.³² Only gradually did Melanchthon recede from his harsh attitude in subsequent editions of his work, and did not conceal his disapproval of Luther's denial of free will. Luther repeatedly invited him from the Wartburg to take up preaching at Wittenberg. This the learned layman, however, would never consent to do. He preferred the lecture room and the serenity of home life. In August, 1520, he had married Catherine Krapp, the daughter of the burgomaster of Wittenberg, and thus formed close social connexions with the inhabitants of that city, which lasted to the end of his life.

The same spirit which impelled Luther to launch his attack upon monasticism, also led him to attack the Sacrifice of the Mass. The monastic state and the Mass he regarded as the most important pillars of the papacy. In the letter in which he informs Melanchthon of his passionate struggle with his vows, he also announces: "I shall never again celebrate a private Mass." Thomas Murner's defense of the sacrificial character of the Mass (1520) did not convince Luther. In 1521, under the influence of his "spiritual baptism" at the Wartburg, Luther composed a Latin booklet *On the Abolition of the Private Mass*, of which he published also a German translation under the title, *On the Misuse of the Mass*.³³

This was the alleged justification of the fight upon the holy sacrifice which at that time commenced at Wittenberg.

³¹ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 239, 282 sqq.

³² *Op. cit.*, II, 282.

³³ Weimar ed., VIII, pp. 411 sqq.; German version, pp. 482 sqq.; Erl. ed., *Opp. Lat. Var.*, VI, pp. 115 sqq. and (German version) XXVIII, pp. 28 sqq.

Luther did not favor any overhasty discontinuation of the traditional liturgical celebrations. He knew that any attempt in this direction would meet with resistance on the part of the Electoral court. Nevertheless, he did whatever he could to realize his designs against the Mass in the university town. In the German treatise just quoted he appealed to his "dear brethren, the Augustinians of Wittenberg," who had already discontinued saying Mass in their church and limited themselves to preaching. He tells them that he rejoices in their work and begs them to take up their position on the rock of firm conviction and at the same time to spare the feelings of the weak. He established his thesis by an appeal to the qualms of conscience which he experienced.

"Daily I feel how very difficult it is to lay aside scruples of long standing, controlled by human laws. Oh, with what great pains and labors, and reliance upon Holy Writ, I have scarcely been able to justify my own conscience, that I, one individual, have dared to oppose the pope and regard him as Anti-christ, the bishops as his apostles, and the universities as his brothels! How often has my heart been tantalized, how often has it punished me and reproached me with their only strongest argument: Are you alone wise? Can it be supposed that all others have erred, and erred so long a time? What if you should be mistaken and should lead many into error, who would be eternally damned? Thus I felt until Christ fortified and confirmed me with His only certain Word, so that now my heart is uneasy no longer, but resists this argument of the papists, as a stony shore resists the waves, and ridicules their threats and fury."³⁴

This strong faith, which the mysterious "only certain Word of Christ" supposedly conferred upon him, he wished to impart to his brethren and all his readers in the course of his arguments against the Mass.

4. CONFUSION AT WITTENBERG. OTHER WRITINGS COMPOSED BY LUTHER DURING HIS SOJOURN AT THE WARTBURG

Luther's attacks on the Mass were attended with greater success at Wittenberg than he had desired. Gabriel Zwilling (Didymus), a young Augustinian, achieved prominence there as an enthusiast for the purified celebration of the Lord's Supper without the Mass. Some

³⁴ At the beginning of the German text, *Vom Missbrauch der Messe*.

called him the new prophet and a second Luther. Melanchthon took his part and missed none of Zwilling's sermons. Karlstadt was no less enthusiastic; he and a committee constituted of like-minded zealots petitioned the Elector for "the speedy abolition of the abuse of Masses in his principality." It was the first application of the principle that ecclesiastical reforms were the affair of territorial rulers. But the circumspect Elector on October 25 issued an order inhibiting any acts which might result in dissension and uprisings.

When discontent nevertheless increased, Luther became alarmed and formed a startling resolution. On December 3, he suddenly left the Wartburg for a secret visit to Wittenberg, clad in his squire's costume. He remained there from December 3 to 11, in the company of his friends, for the sake of obtaining information on the state of affairs, but eight days later he was back at the Wartburg.

He used the information thus acquired, which was partly unsatisfactory, in the composition of a tract, entitled *A Sincere Exhortation to all Christians to Guard against Rebellion*.⁸⁵

It appears, he says, as if an insurrection is threatening, in which priests, monks, bishops, and the whole clerical estate might be slain. By hearkening to his words, however, such a general attack might yet be avoided. Christ had reserved to Himself the punishment of papism, in order to slay Antichrist by the breath of His mouth. People should wait two years, then it would be accomplished as a result of the gigantic and irresistible progress of his Gospel, which was very evidently the work of God. "It is not our work. . . . 'tis someone else who propels the wheel."

In the sequel, he requests his followers to call themselves Christians, not Lutherans. "Who is Luther? The doctrine is not mine; nor have I been crucified for anyone."

But above all: The weak and inadequately instructed must not be taken by surprise or violence. The authorities only, and not "Herr Omnes" (*i. e.*, the masses) have the right and the duty to intervene against whatever is contrary to the Gospel. The devil purposes to injure the evangelical doctrine by fomenting rebellion.

The extent of his illusion regarding the speedy collapse of the kingdom of Antichrist may be inferred from the postil he at that time composed for the second Sunday of Advent. According to the astronomers, he says, a great constellation of planets was imminent

⁸⁵ *Werke*, Weimar ed., VIII, pp. 676 sqq.; Erl. ed., XXII, pp. 44 sq.; written at the beginning of 1522.

for the year 1524. The powers of heaven, according to the Sunday Gospel, would be convulsed. God grant that it be the "Day of Judgment to which the signs certainly point."³⁶

During his sojourn at the Wartburg Luther also completed his remarkable interpretation of the Magnificat, which he dedicated to the heir to the Saxon throne.³⁷ It is a remarkable production on account of the note of sincere piety which the author, in the very midst of a hostile and agitated campaign, sounds in these pages; remarkable, too, because of the author's eulogy of the "Blessed Virgin," "the tender Mother of the Lord." The commentary is largely pervaded by the traditional devotion with which the Augustinian Order revered Mary, though it fails to do justice to her exalted virtues or to her position as the advocate of Christendom before the throne of God. Luther mainly extolled the faith of the Blessed Virgin, as conceived in accordance with his new doctrine of justification. He was aware of, and carefully took into consideration, the sentiments of the prince to whom the work was dedicated, and who had a lively attachment to many practices of the ancient religion which were still appreciated by Luther. Later on, when the prince warmly supported his person and his work, he learned that the successor to the throne regarded him as a profoundly pious man and a peaceful religious reformer. Besides its religious note, Luther's treatise on the Magnificat is pacific in so far as the polemical ideas which it contains are veiled and not clothed in his customary harsh language. Fundamentally, however, it, too, is a controversial treatise, as is indicated by such superfluous admonitions as that Mary is "no helping goddess," even though Luther does not as yet condemn the practice of praying for her intercession.³⁸ While the book is not, as has been asserted, a monument of the author's profound piety, nevertheless, one must marvel at the ideas in which it abounds, the dexterity with which the style is varied, and the adroitness with which the author adapts himself to his readers. For the rest, Luther always believed in the virginity of Mary, even *post partum*, as affirmed in the Apostles' Creed, though afterwards he denied her power of intercession, as well as that of the saints in general, resorting to many misinterpretations and combated, as extreme and pagan, the extraordinary veneration which the Catholic Church

³⁶ Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, Vol. I, p. 478.

³⁷ Weimar ed., VII, pp. 544 sq.; Erl. ed., XLV, pp. 212 sq.

³⁸ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, p. 237.

showed towards Mary. His prayer-book, which appeared in 1522, retained the Ave Maria side by side with the Pater Noster and the Creed. As late as 1527 he even acknowledged the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, in conformity with the theological traditions of the Augustinian Order.³⁹

At the beginning of 1522, Luther dedicated to the Pope his scornful tract *Vom Abendfressen des allerheiligsten Herrn des Papstes*.⁴⁰ This crude production is a reference to the Bull *In Caena Domini*, which was published annually on Maundy Thursday at Rome. This document was a comprehensive condemnation of heresy, and it now listed Luther among the condemned heretics. Luther derides the pope as a drunkard who in his frenzy curses and swears and uses the Latin of a "kitchen scullion." He translates the solemn judicial document and accompanies it with coarse annotations. In the introduction he declares that "the Rhine is scarcely large enough to drown all the scoundrels"—such as the "retailers of bulls, cardinals, legates," etc., besides archbishops, bishops, abbots, etc. Did such language serve his previously mentioned purpose to quell violence and sedition?

It is a puzzle how Luther, during his short sojourn at the Wartburg, in addition to his other work, was able to translate the New Testament from Greek into a German of undeniable excellence. He practically completed this important task within the incredibly short space of three months. We postpone an appreciation of his New Testament to a later page, where we shall deal with his rendition of the Bible as a whole. As a literary document, it is truly monumental.⁴¹ For the present we will consider only its polemical purpose. Luther intended his Bible to be read by the masses, so that it might win followers to his new gospel. To accomplish this purpose he did not scruple to alter the text in numerous places. The aggressive tendency of the translator is emphasized by the wood-cuts which illustrate the Apocalypse. There the woman of Babylon is repeatedly shown crowned with the papal tiara; Catholic dignitaries, and even the Emperor, are depicted as rendering homage to the bearer of the cup of sin and blasphemy; like Babylon, papal Rome collapses and is consumed by fire; the defenders of the papacy are depicted as dragons with

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, IV, 238 and 500 sqq.

⁴⁰ *Werke*, Weimar ed., VIII, pp. 601 sqq.; Erl. ed., XXIV², pp. 166 sqq. "*Fressen*" is a contemptuous term used only of animals.

⁴¹ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 494 sqq.

seven heads, and so forth. These illustrations escaped observation until quite recently. They are in complete harmony with the utterly abnormal apocalyptic frame of mind in which Luther was at that time. In this respect, Luther's celebrated German version of the New Testament ranks with the polemical illustrations of the "Passionale of Christ and Antichrist," by which at the beginning of the Wartburg period he enlisted the aid of the graphic arts in the campaign against religion.⁴²

5. THE RETURN. VICTORY AT WITTENBERG

Whilst Luther was occupied with the translation of the Bible in the solitude of the Wartburg, events happened at Wittenberg which induced him to move back to the university town, in spite of many and great dangers.

On December 3, students and citizens attacked certain priests who intended to celebrate Mass in the parish church there. The monastery of the Discalced Friars as well as a number of cathedral canons were menaced. Worst of all, the tumultuous Karlstadt, who cut such a sorry figure at the disputation of Leipsic, set himself up as the leader of the new movement with the intention of becoming not a dilatory, but a consistent Luther. He announced that matrimony must be obligatory for the clergy and that the reception of the Eucharist without the chalice was not permissible. On Christmas he for the first time commemorated the Lord's Supper without celebrating Mass, by administering bread and wine to all who so desired, without previous confession. On January 19, he, as deacon of All Saints, solemnly took unto himself a wife. The Augustinians who still remained at Wittenberg removed every altar but one from their church and burned the images of the saints as well as the holy oils. Karlstadt asserted that images were prohibited by Holy Scripture (Ex. 20, 4) and denounced them as idols. As a consequence, the sacred images and statues were cast out of the various churches. The monk Zwilling conducted a similar iconoclastic campaign in the towns and villages about Wittenberg. He proscribed ecclesiastical vestments and preached his revolutionary innovations clad in the characteristic attire of the students of that time. Confessions were discontinued; the law of fasting was disre-

⁴² Grisar-Heege, *Luthers Kampfbilder: I. Das Passionale, II. Der Bilderkampf in der deutschen Bibel*, with 14 plates.

garded; there was a movement to abolish all feast-days except Sundays; the religious consolations for the sick, prisoners and those about to be executed fell into desuetude. In lieu of these it was proposed to devote greater attention to the alleviation of temporal needs by the institution of a so-called community chest which was enriched by mass stipends and other ecclesiastical funds. Karlstadt introduced a thoroughly shallow lay Christianity. It was his intention to promote a natural but spiritualistic religiosity in opposition to Luther's massive doctrine of the imputation of the merits of Christ.⁴³ Like Luther he believed that he was inspired from on high.

A new and dangerous element was injected into this movement when, on December 27, the so-called prophets of Zwickau visited Melanchthon at Wittenberg. They were: Nicholas Storch and Mark Stübner, two cloth-weavers, who claimed to have received a direct call from God to preach. They had been inducted by Thomas Müntzer into the prophetic life and into direct converse with God and maintained that man is obliged to learn everything through the Spirit, and to aspire to the most complete self-renunciation and apathy. Not only was the Church to be reformed by one greater than Luther, but the civil order, too, was to be altered, all priests were to be slain, and all godless people extirpated. They attacked especially Luther's doctrine of infant baptism and hence were called Anabaptists. If faith alone makes the Sacrament efficacious, they contended against Luther, then adults only can be baptized, since children are incapable of faith. The inference cannot be denied.

Like many others, Melanchthon, who was deficient in intellectual acumen, allowed himself to be taken in by these "prophets." When Luther heard of this he was greatly worried and tried to inspire Melanchthon with distrust toward these fanatics.⁴⁴ His troubles were increased in virtue of the tumultuous innovations which were introduced in Wittenberg and environs. Luckily, Karlstadt did not make common cause with the "prophets," but the feeble efforts of the Elector were impotent to arrest the innovations of Karlstadt.

These reforms were favored by a semblance of truth—if one took the Lutheran position. Luther himself had set a precedent in

⁴³ H. Barge, *Karlstadt*, Vol. I, p. 404.

⁴⁴ Briefwechsel III, p. 273, 13th of January, 1522: "Neque enim Deus unquam aliquem misit, nisi vel per hominem vocatum vel per signa declaratum. . . . Quaeras, num experti sint spirituales angustias et nativitates divinas, mortes infernosque." He says God Himself speaks in the verse: "Contrivit omnia ossa mea" (Is. XXXVIII, 13.)

altering the divine services. The others were simply following his example. The enthusiasts of Zwickau were not only justified in their opposition to his doctrine concerning baptism, but their private revelations and theories of interior experience were essentially not far removed from Luther's contention that the Spirit alone must guide man. Nor did they deviate very much from his view of supernatural revelation, although he himself was naturally unwilling to grant that their strange and arbitrary conduct was the result of visions. Strangely enough, he asked Melanchthon to tell the "prophets" of Zwickau that even raptures capable of transporting men into the third heaven furnished no proof of their claims, but they would have to work miracles and also to show that they had been made partakers of the spiritual travails and the divine re-birth which penetrated death and hell—that terrible regeneration which he believed to have experienced and which he maintained to be the standard by which to judge whether one were really and truly justified.

Writing of affairs at Wittenberg, the Elector Frederick said: "Everything went wrong, everybody became perplexed, and no one knew who was cook or cellarer."⁴⁵ It was then that the imperial government finally issued a strict warning (June 20, 1522) to all the bishops and to the above-mentioned Elector to ferret out and punish those who disturbed the religious peace and violated ecclesiastical discipline. The bishops of Meissen and Merseburg indicated their intention to obey and Frederick caused representations to be made to Luther.

What was decisive, however, was that Luther himself now resolved to terminate the disorderly state of affairs by resuming his residence at Wittenberg. Naturally he realized that his territorial lord might be seriously embarrassed by the imperial authorities if he openly permitted the outlaw to return to the university and sheltered him in his territory. However, cognizant of the high esteem in which that prince held him, and relying upon Frederick's favorable attitude towards the new religion, Luther ventured upon a course of action which would otherwise have been foolhardy. Moreover, at the conclusion of his last letter, Frederick had practically put the decision up to Luther by saying that he would leave everything to his dis-

⁴⁵ Köstlin-Kawerau, *M. Luther*, I, p. 495.

cretion, since he was experienced in such important matters.⁴⁶ His return was energetically requested by the authorities of the city of Wittenberg as well as by the University, which had been induced to take this step at the behest of Melanchthon, who was completely bewildered. Thus Luther started on the hazardous journey without notifying the Elector.

He left the Wartburg on the morning of March 1, attired in his squire's costume, and rode towards Borna, south of Leipsic, by way of Jena, where he met the Wittenberg student Kessler, a native of Switzerland, with several companions, in the Inn of the Bear. At Borna he wrote a letter to the Elector, which Protestant historians are wont to represent as a marvelous product of devout heroism.

Since he had received his Gospel not from man but from Heaven—thus he writes in a vein of beguiling confidence—he would now return, in order not to yield to the devil, who had caused the consternation at Wittenberg. He realized that he had powerful opponents, such as Duke George of Saxony (who had issued the most dire threats against Luther in a letter to the Elector, his cousin); yet he was not afraid. Even if the state of affairs at Leipsic, where George resided, were as bad as at Wittenberg, he would, nevertheless, proceed to that place, even if the menaces of vain George became nine times more dire and if every inhabitant were nine times worse than he. He was going to Wittenberg under a far higher protection than that afforded him by his Elector. God was with him, and therefore he did not need the protection of the ruler; indeed, he intended rather to protect Frederick than be protected by him; for the Elector's faith was still weak, whereas his own was strong. He requests the prince, in the event that he be apprehended or murdered, not to resist the authorities of the empire, for that would be contrary to the will of God who had instituted them. The empire, he hopes, would not expect the prince to become his [Luther's] jailer. In conclusion he rises to the height of a spiritualistic style: "If your grace would have the faith, you would vision the majesty of God; but as you have not yet the faith, you have seen nothing."

This is Luther's so-called "heroic letter" from Borna. It is undoubtedly the utterance of an incomparably courageous man; but it is also the product of a mind which cannot be comprehended except

⁴⁶ *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 295. The importance of these words is enhanced by the fact that shortly before, at the end of February, 1522, Luther had announced to the Elector his early return to Wittenberg. Erl. ed., LIII, p. 183 (*Briefwechsel*, III, p. 291).

on the assumption that he was impelled by the fixed idea of being divinely inspired. No man can write thus unless he pretends to be an ambassador of God and who does not realize that his entire future is at stake. The situation in which Luther found himself compelled him to impress his territorial lord as forcefully as possible in order to assure the success of his move. And he succeeded in doing this because Frederick was a diplomat, sickly, and a Bible reader who favored the Lutheran innovations. Luther, on the other hand, was simply compelled to resume his abode at Wittenberg and to sever the chain which bound him to the Wartburg, if he did not wish to see his life-work shattered. In no other way was he able to keep control of the reins which, as he believed, had been entrusted to him by God. Thus considered, his resolution as well as the letter lose somewhat of their heroic character and enter into the sphere of tangible and practical calculation. At all events, considering the edict of Worms and its threats, his enterprise was a venture which might just as well have led to the fall of Luther's work, as it actually did to its progress. This remains true, even if two other natural motives are taken into consideration. Luther's long confinement was bound eventually to become a stifling burden to a man of his temperament—a burden to be shaken off at any price, even if the effort involved great danger. The second factor is the order issued by the imperial government to the Elector and the bishops. It was bound to move Luther to form a strong resolution to settle the disturbances at Wittenberg. If he succeeded in this, he would be the man of the hour, and would prove himself useful, if not rehabilitated in the eyes of the empire. In the opinion of many, therefore, he would no longer be accounted a noxious revolutionist, as his opponents represented him to be. This is offered in explanation of the "heroic act" of Borna.

"Squire George" made his entry into Wittenberg on March 6, escorted by a number of knights who had joined him on the way. Kessler, the Swiss student, describes his exterior appearance as "quite corpulent"; his bearing was erect, but as he walked, he bent backward rather than forward; his head was lifted high. Kessler particularly observes his "deep-set black eyes and eyebrows, blinking and twinkling like stars, so that it was not comfortable to behold them." In the following year, this striking expression of Luther's eyes is thus described by the bishop of Kulm and Ermland, John Dantiscus, who

had seen and conversed with Luther at Wittenberg: "His eyes are penetrating," he says; "they have a certain sinister sparkle, such as one finds from time to time in persons who are possessed by the devil." His features, he added, reminded one of the character of his books, his conversation was excited and replete with risque allusions and ridicule.⁴⁷

In addition to the letter which Luther had despatched from Borna, the Elector was pleased to receive another communication from him upon his arrival at Wittenberg. In this letter, which had been expressly requested by the Elector, Luther spoke of his return to Wittenberg, and the Elector intended to exhibit it in public, to enable Luther to justify his step himself. The letter was actually read by the Elector's representative at the imperial court and by other important persons.

On the following Sunday Luther, elated at his achievement, confidently ascended the pulpit of the town-church, whence for eight successive days he delivered the most vehement sermons imaginable against the prevalent frenzy. Owing to his powerful action, not to say his hypnotic gifts, he was able to repel all opposition and to restore order. His chief thought was that the weak, *i. e.*, those who had not as yet attained to a full conviction of the value and freedom of the Gospel, should not be perturbed by precipitous innovations. The objects of a general amelioration had better be sought by gentle and circumspect methods. By his prudence and the force of his eloquence, he succeeded in gaining control of the situation and forcing Karlstadt with his associates into the background. The text of these famous sermons was subsequently revised by Aurifaber, who published them. Luther made them the basis of his treatise "On the Reception of the Sacrament under Both Forms," which appeared soon after.⁴⁸

In this work he declares that charity was violated towards those who were not of his party, "who belong to us and must be made to join us." A man is not bound to do what he has a right to do. Then, too, he (Luther) should have been consulted, since the town council had conferred the office of preaching in Wittenberg upon him. The Mass was to be abolished, but not by violence. Marriage of the clergy, the monastic life, fasting, images in

⁴⁷ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, p. 357; cfr. Vol. III, p. 429; Vol. I, pp. 86, 279; Vol. II, pp. 158 sq.

⁴⁸ Weimar ed., Vol. X, II, pp. 11 sq.; Erlangen ed., Vol. XXVIII, pp. 285, sqq.

the churches, etc., were matters left free by God. Things would right themselves without ordinances and coercion, provided the Word of God entered the hearts of men.

"While I slept and drank beer with my Philippo [Melanchthon] and with Amsdorf in Wittenberg, the Word did so much to weaken the papacy as no prince or emperor ever did before. I have done nothing; the Word has done and achieved everything."

Everyone who is convinced he is right should make a determined use of his liberty. If he is forbidden to eat meat on fast-days, he should straightway eat it; if the pope tries to compel him to remain in the monastic state, he should discard the cowl. Then, contradicting himself, he states that the use of the chalice by the laity is an ordinance of Christ, as it pertains to the essence of the Eucharist, yet it is free and must not be made compulsory. The chalice is to be given to those who desire it, but it is not to be forced upon the congregation. Consequently, here too we have a twofold form of administering the Sacrament with the inevitable danger of provoking a cleavage among the faithful.

Luther's attitude respecting the use of images was equally indefinite. The images of saints, crucifixes, etc., are not to be abolished on their own account, but only to serve God. Because of the harmful abuse to which they have been put, they do not deserve to be retained. If people once find out that images are worthless, they will disappear.

The old form of confession should be abolished and a voluntary confession of sins substituted for it. He says that he himself had experienced the consolation and strength to be derived from this latter kind of confession, without which the devil would have choked him to death long ago. "I am well acquainted with him [the devil]; and he knows me. If you knew him, you would not thus repudiate confession." Luther, therefore, proposes to retain confession on the strength of his own experience and by virtue of his own authority, whereas the Catholic Church appeals to the authority of Christ. He orders the penitent to confess to anyone whom he may select, whereas the Church directs the penitent to an ordained priest. He directs the penitent to confess for the sake of obtaining consolation, whereas the Church directs him for the sake of obtaining remission of his sins through the Sacrament of Penance. He does not acknowledge the sacramental seal of confession which the Church imposes upon the priest.

But this is not the place to emphasize all the defects and contradictions of the ecclesiastical system advocated by Luther as contrasted with the laws that prevailed in the ancient Church. They will suggest themselves spontaneously to the thoughtful reader.

In one particular Luther openly proclaims the necessity, and at the same time the impracticability of a measure proposed by himself. For the practice of auricular confession he would substitute a kind of ecclesiastical ban as

an indispensable disciplinary measure. After exhortations have proved unavailing, "adulterers, usurers, robbers, and drunkards" should be excommunicated in the name of the congregation. "However," he says, "I do not venture to carry this out alone." Owing to the internal defects of his religious system, his well-intentioned endeavors in this respect were never fully successful, though stricter ecclesiastical discipline would have been precisely the most necessary requirement after the tumultuous scenes witnessed at Wittenberg.

On the whole, as even the most eminent among the Protestant biographers of Luther acknowledges, one is "compelled to question whether the way which Luther in these sermons prescribed for ecclesiastical reforms, was actually fit to attain the object he had in view, namely, a Christian regimen with purified regulations."⁴⁹ Indeed, the unlucky star of dissension between his basic demand of a false liberty and the need of unity and order hovered visibly over the beginnings of his practical attempts at reform.

Karlstadt adapted himself grudgingly to the altered state of affairs, but pursued his own course. He declared that learned studies were useless and on one occasion, when a young theologian was being promoted to the doctorate, publicly attacked the title of "Master" as repugnant to the Word of Christ. He said he preferred to live in the country as a peasant and to learn from peasants the interpretation of Holy Writ as it had been imparted to them from on high. He chose to call himself "Neighbor Andrew" and appeared in the grey garb of a peasant. Having a propensity for false mysticism, he established relations with the seer and reformer, Thomas Münzer.

The "prophets of Zwickau" had abandoned Wittenberg. In the course of an interview with Mark Stübner, Luther had challenged him to prove his mission by a miraculous sign. It was a suggestion which Stübner could have cast back at Luther. Stübner, however, boldly declared that he would comply with the demand. Thereupon Luther asserted that his God would prevent the gods of such false prophets from performing any miracles. This ended the conference, and Luther saw nothing more of the "prophets of Zwickau." The restless and fanatical Münzer, on the other hand, endeavored to reapproach him and explained to him in a letter how, amid inward fears, he had become assured that his was a true divine revelation. In spreading his false ideas, therefore, he applied the same standard which Luther claimed for himself, namely, the way of interior agony. His

⁴⁹ Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, 5th ed., Vol. I, p. 507.

claim, however, did not impress Luther, whose practical sagacity would not permit him to place the least trust in this over-excited Communist.

One who entered the parish church of Wittenberg after Luther's victory, discovered that the same vestments were used for divine service as of yore, and heard the same old Latin hymns. The Host was elevated and exhibited at the Consecration. In the eyes of the people it was the same Mass as before, except that Luther omitted all prayers which represented the sacred function as a sacrifice. The people were intentionally kept in the dark on this point. "We cannot draw the common people away from the Sacrament, and it will probably be thus until the gospel is well understood."⁵⁰ The rite of the celebration of the Mass he explained as "a purely external thing" and said that the damnable words referring to the sacrifice could be omitted all the more readily, since the ordinary Christian would not notice the omission and hence there was no danger of scandal. The words in question, especially those of the canon, are pronounced almost inaudibly in the popish Church.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Von beider Gestalt, das ander Teil.*

⁵¹ Köstlin-Kawerau, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 511.