

## CHAPTER VII

### THE YEAR OF THE BAN

#### I. BEFORE THE BAN

The friendly invitation which had been extended to Luther to visit Rome, occasioned by the distorted reports of Miltitz, was barren of results. The papal brief addressed to the "beloved son" was suppressed by the Saxon court, and Luther never knew of it. Nor was this a misfortune; for it would only have been the occasion of misinterpretation and derision. Luther was unflinchingly resolved to carry out his programme and the Saxon Elector artfully and perseveringly continued his maneuvers to shield the rebellious monk.

It was to the advantage of both that Miltitz with his unfortunate efforts at reconciliation did not disappear from the scene. He invented the proposal that Luther should present himself to the archbishop-elector of Treves as a non-partisan judge. In the course of these negotiations he pretended that this archbishop had been legitimately appointed by Cardinal Cajetan to render a judicial verdict in the matter. It was a phantom that did not materialize. Extremely strange and dubious is the statement which Frederick of Saxony attributed to the archbishop of Treves, that Pope Leo X was prepared to make Luther a cardinal if he would retract his errors.

Relative to the policy of Leo X in the great questions of that day, especially in that of the election of a German emperor, there is no doubt that it strongly affected his attitude toward the Saxon Elector and, mediately, toward the latter's protégé. For some time Leo had favored the promotion of Frederick of Saxony, the most esteemed and influential German prince of the time, to the dignity of emperor to succeed the deceased Maximilian I. Subsequently he promoted the cause of the youthful Charles V, even though his election to that dignity would have placed him in dangerous proximity to the capital of Christendom as King of Naples.

The most decisive step taken by Luther after the Leipsic disputation and prior to his condemnation by Rome, was the publication, in

June, 1520, of his work, "On the Papacy at Rome."<sup>1</sup> He now intended to strike the Church a mortal blow by disproving the doctrine of the primacy. The occasion was the written attack made on him by a learned Franciscan of Leipsic, Augustine Alfeld, professor of Biblical science in the monastery of his Order in that city, who had publicly espoused the cause of the divine right of the papacy. The subject had aroused the sympathy of Catholics, who correctly perceived that here was the center of the conflict and the decisive battle-field of the future. The other errors would be defeated if the authority of the papacy was firmly established from Holy Writ and the tradition of fifteen centuries. In his hastily compiled reply to the "highly celebrated Romanist of Leipsic," Luther undertook to refute this "monkish booklet," as he styled it, on a broad basis. In his own book, which he had composed in German for the masses to read, Luther expounded his doctrine that the Church does not require a pope, that a visible head is inconsistent with its nature, and that the attachment of that head to a definite place such as Rome, is inconsistent with its character as a spiritual, invisible kingdom, a congregation of all the faithful who cannot be differentiated individually according to their interior dispositions. The true Church of Christ, who is its only Head, is made manifest only by certain signs, namely, Baptism, the Eucharist, and the preaching of the true Gospel (as purified by Luther). The power of the keys is conferred upon all Christians collectively, including the laity, and does not consist in the absolute sovereignty of any spiritual government, but is solely the assurance to be awakened by Christians of divine forgiveness and mercy for consciences in need of consolation in their brethren. Here the old starting-point of Lutheranism emerges once more: Quiescence of the timorous soul as the supreme end.

In the course of his work Luther indulges in unprecedented invectives against the covetousness of the pope, whom he constantly implicates in the shocking villainies of the Romanists. He passionately invokes the patriotism of the Germans and, in particular, the economic and nationalistic ambitions of the princes and the nobility against the ecclesiastical régime of the Italian curia. At Rome, he says, they speak of the drunken Germans who must be fooled. They regard us as beasts. They say: "The German fools must be separated from their money by all manner of means." "If," he finally exclaims,

<sup>1</sup> *Werke*, Weimar ed., Vol. VI, pp. 285 sqq.; Erlangen ed., XXVII, pp. 86 sqq.

"if the German princes and nobility do not bestir themselves very soon, Germany will become a desert or it will have to eat itself." This pamphlet contains many violent invectives but no solid argument. A Protestant critic (*Vorreiter*) correctly judges that it is filled with "consummate sophistry" and "defies the most elementary logic."

The courageous Alfeld was denounced by Luther as "an uncivil ass which cannot even bray!" But he did not permit himself to be frightened. Subsequently he penned still other solid treatises on the debated questions of the day.

About this time Luther was engaged in the composition of his exhaustive "Sermon on Good Works"—a work which is very important for a deeper understanding of his mental development.<sup>2</sup> He says that it treats of "the greatest question that has arisen," and that the publication of the book appeared to him to be more necessary than any of his sermons or smaller works.<sup>3</sup> For, on account of his doctrine that man is saved by faith alone he was loudly accused of being opposed to good works. He now wishes to restore them to honor, and, at the same time, glorify faith, as he understood it, as the pillar of good works. He dedicated this "Sermon," which had grown into a book in consequence of his rapid industry, to the brother of his territorial lord, Duke John of Saxony, who was very favorably inclined to him and sought edification in religious books. Thus, in a certain sense, this book was a parallel to his consolatory tract "Tessaradekas," which he had shortly before dedicated to the sick Elector Frederick. Luther's precarious position at Wittenberg moved him to correspond with the court which protected him. Throughout this tract he appears to be very solicitous about true virtue. It has been characterized by Protestants, even in recent years, as "the first description and demonstration of evangelical morality by the reformer."<sup>4</sup>

This is an added reason for subjecting it to a closer inspection. Luther's alleged true conception of Christian liberty had its origin in the Epistles of St. Paul, particularly in his commentary on Galatians, published in 1519. The liberty of the believing soul be-

<sup>2</sup> *Werke*, Weimar ed., VI, pp. 202 sqq.; cf. IX, pp. 229 sqq.; Erlangen ed., XVI (2nd ed.), pp. 121 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> See the dedication.

<sup>4</sup> J. Köstlin, *M. Luther*, I, 5th ed., p. 291.

came his favorite theme. Somewhat later, at the time of the proclamation of the ban, he developed it in his well-known treatise, *On the Liberty of a Christian*. For the sake of his attitude toward good works, he pushes his conception of freedom from commandments and obligations somewhat into the background. In this book he teaches: Although the true Christian is subject to no law, faith alone being necessary for him, whilst everything else is voluntary, yet because of this very faith, and impelled by it, he submits to the commandments, which are necessary on account of the weak sinners; indeed, a Christian is constantly occupied with good works. His faith urges him to do good. Where there are no good works, there is no true faith. Faith, however, according to Luther, is never anything else but an uninterrupted trust in God's mercy through the merits of Christ. This joyous confidence he regards as the sole source of morality. The sentences which we have quoted and which, in part, are echoes of the work's mystical aberrations have about them something deceptive and apparently attractive. But his glorification of faith, *i. e.*, trust inspired by faith, is permeated by that forcible struggle for the quieting of his own inner needs and fears which led him to cling to the doctrine of faith as the sole means of salvation.

The fundamental deficiency of his theory of good works cannot escape the critical eye.

In the first place, he says, good works are only such as have been commanded by God. Such a thing as the voluntary assumption of a moral act that is not commanded by God does not exist for him. Consequently, the main artery of the perfect life is severed. There is no foundation for the intense pursuit of virtue or for heroism. The saints of the Bible or of Church history, whose wondrous deeds were not inspired by divine command, were simply fools.

Hence, according to Luther, good works flow spontaneously from confident faith in the blood of Christ. But neither his own life nor that of others confirms this doctrine.

The self-righteous, of whom the world under the rule of the papacy is full, are supposed to know nothing of faith in the blood of Christ. They err, according to Luther, because, without Christ, they invest their own works with value for salvation. Luther's utterly false arraignment of the Catholic doctrine of good works is here again resuscitated in drastic form.

His assertion that the self-righteous papists sinned against faith in the blood of Christ, was bound to meet with speedy and decisive retorts on the part of Catholics. The Humanist Pirkheimer, after renouncing Lutheranism, which he had favored for a while, wrote: "we know that we are justified gratuitously by the grace of God and the atonement which is in Christ Jesus, through which we obtain the remission of sins"; we are not justified by our works alone, but by the death of the Son of God; nevertheless, "we cannot have life without good works, and if they are performed for no other reason, then they should be performed out of gratitude to God and His only begotten Son." Others very appropriately referred Luther to the known bases of good works, namely, the necessity of doing penance and atoning for sins, the need of supplicating God's help in the affairs of temporal existence, and above all else the command of the Bible that we must gain Heaven through the merits of good works performed with grace. Everyone was familiar with the concept that the love of God must sustain and enoble all good works.

In the formulation of this new doctrine, Luther is governed by the idea, conceived during his mystical period, that those works only can be called good which proceed from the motive of absolutely perfect love. Hence he likes to portray how this love, as an activity in man and an efficient motive urging him to goodness, is joined with the fiduciary faith that springs from his gospel. For the rest, moral spontaneity is suppressed in his system. The contradiction is obvious.

Man, according to Luther, is not free to do good. God alone is the cause of everything. Even reason does not attain to the truly spiritual, and the co-operation of man in working out his salvation is, according to a casual expression of his, only a figment of "that mad harlot," the brain.<sup>5</sup>

Luther pretends to ignore the doctrine of faith (*fides formata caritate*) as taught by the Catholic Church. But in opposition thereto, in his above-quoted sermon, glorifies faith because love abides in faith and results in good works. Thus generally, in his practical writings he abandons his theories of the unfree will and the faith produced by God, invariably demands self-activity, and represents love as an element of faith. This contradiction apparently remains hidden to him because of his quite intelligible effort to appear as a promoter of good works, as the founder of true morality in contrast with the self-righteousness of the papal system.

"The Catholic conception of faith by its emphasis on good works is something so natural, something that so obtrudes itself upon the Christian and

<sup>5</sup> *Werke*, Weimar ed., Vol. XVII, I, p. 58.

natural conscience, that we need not be surprised if Luther, in contradiction with his reformatory principle, frequently testifies to this truth.”<sup>6</sup> Luther himself says on one occasion: “The entire nature (of man) seeks good works, when he is not subject to temptation.”<sup>7</sup> The new system had been suggested to him by his so-called temptations.

Certain extreme expressions employed by Luther were derived from this same false principle. Thus he says in 1520: “Let us beware of sin, but much more of laws and good works; and let us only observe well the divine promise and faith; then good works will readily follow.” Now, good works are prescribed by God in Sacred Scripture. Here we perceive a new contradiction in Luther’s teaching. One of the most eminent theologians of modern Protestantism aptly wrote: “If it is asked why God, who connects salvation with justification by faith, prescribes good works and wishes to be honored by them, the arbitrariness of this disposition cannot be concealed. . . . Nor it is evident that good works should serve every man as the *ratio cognitionis* of his own justification.” According to Luther, he adds, the value of good works must not be considered at all, and yet his doctrine bases the certain consciousness of justification on a measure of good works. “Confronted with these contradictory judgments of moral action, shall anyone find that repose which justification is supposed to guarantee him?” (Albrecht Ritschl).

But, to continue with the characterization of the much discussed Sermon on Good Works, the author, after having announced his new principles, takes up the Ten Commandments one by one. He wishes to demonstrate how faith works itself out through good works in the case of each commandment. This part of his treatise is full of sound, inspiring ideas, which are identical with the ancient Catholic teaching. Nor does it lack charm and warmth. Duke John and many other readers might be greatly edified by the popular exhortations contained in this work. Though Luther, for instance, does not acknowledge any commandments, such as that of fasting, he asserts that faith leads the devout Christian to chastise his flesh in order that concupiscence might be broken thereby; likewise he intimates that the religious observance of Sunday rest must serve to allay the passions. On the other hand, he adds, on his own responsibility, that physical labor on Sunday, according to Christian liberty, is not to be regarded as prohibited; all days should be holy days and work days. There follow certain recommendations, e.g., to be patient under the

<sup>6</sup> Jos. Mausbach *Die katholische Moral und ihre Gegner*, 1911, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Opp. Exegct.*, XX, p. 188.

tyranny of an unjust ruler, since corporal sufferings or material losses cannot injure the soul; rather, to suffer injustice improves the soul and injustice is not so dangerous by far to the spiritual as it is to the temporal authorities.

Here he again seizes the opportunity to inveigh against the abuses of the spiritual authorities from which the German nation was supposed to suffer.

"Behold, these are the real Turks." "It is not right that we should support the servants, the subjects, yea the rogues and harlots of the pope to the loss and injury of our souls." In these words he favored the view of obedience as conceived by the Elector of Saxony and his court. Now he appeals to the princes, the nobility, and all public authorities to defend themselves "with the secular sword" against the burdens imposed by Rome and its clergy, "since there is no other help or remedy." The bishops and clergy opposed to the machinations of Rome were full of fear. Hence, "the best and only remaining remedy would be for kings, princes, nobles, cities, and communes to put a stop to these abuses." These particular Turks "kings, princes, and nobility should attack first of all;" they should "treat this same clergy like a father who had lost his reason" and is imprisoned with all honors.<sup>8</sup>

With all honors, he says, and continues: "Thus we should honor the Roman authority as our supreme father; and yet, since it has become mad and irrational, we should not allow it to carry out its purpose." It was, of course, but a figment of Luther's imagination that the expected measure would be taken "with all honors." The purposely selected phrase "supreme father" has no weight, but merely indicates the respect which the cautious court of Saxony still tried to foster toward the pope.

With still less restraint Luther summoned the people to revolt in a short reply which he published at that time to the *Epitome* of the papal court theologian Prierias. As an indication of the contempt with which he regarded this book he had it reprinted in its entirety, adding a series of violent attacks,<sup>9</sup> in the course of which he made a formal appeal to bloodshed. This appeal was couched in such violent language that the early Protestant editors of his works did not dare to publish it in its entirety; it betrayed a passion no longer master of itself.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Schlusswort des Sermons vom Neuen Testamente*, Werke, Weimar ed., VI, pp. 353 sqq. Erlangen ed., XXVII, pp. 141 sqq.

<sup>9</sup> Werke, Weimar ed., VI, p. 328; Opp. Lat. Var., II, pp. 79 sqq.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. H. Grisar, "Cur non manus nostras in sanguine istorum lavamus?" in the *Histor. Jahrbuch* of the Görres Society, XLI, 1921, pp. 248-257 (*Luther-Analekten*, V).

"If the fury of the Romanists goes on thus," he writes, "it seems to me there is no other remedy left to the emperor, the kings, and the princes than to attack this pest of the earth by means of arms, and to decide the matter with the sword instead of words. For what else do these lost people, bereft of reason, do than what Antichrist will do according to the prophecy? They hold us to be more unfeeling than all blockheads. If we punish thieves with the gallows, robbers with the sword, heretics with fire, then why do we not equip ourselves with every weapon and proceed against these teachers of corruption, these cardinals, these popes, and this whole swarm from Roman Sodom which corrupts the Church of God without end? Why do we not wash our hands in their blood? We would thus free ourselves and our own from the most dangerous universal conflagration in existence. How fortunate those Christians, wheresoever they may be, who are not compelled to live under such an Antichrist of Rome, as we unfortunate wretches!"

Naturally Luther did not persist in the bloody designs which he conceived in a moment of sudden excitement. It was an impossibility to follow his crazy call. In a calmer hour he afterwards wrote to Spalatin words which were destined for the Saxon Elector: Not by force and murder should the gospel be contended for, but Antichrist is preferably to be crushed by means of the Word; if, as he fears, a revolt against the clergy should break out, he himself would be quite innocent of the calamity, because he—so he now avers—advised the nobility to have recourse, not to the sword, but to "edicts" against the Romanists.<sup>11</sup>

Luther's vehement appeals to the sword and his call for blood, which followed closely upon the publication of the work of Prierias, were not caused by the tone of the Roman tract, but by the clearness with which that writer expounded the doctrine of the primacy of the Holy See. The calmly written tract was really but the table of contents of a larger work which Prierias intended to publish. It was remarkably free from offensive and inflammatory language. In his blind rage, however, Luther directed his whole opposition against spiritual submission to the pope, whom he denounced as Antichrist. The principal objection, so far as he was concerned, were not the acts of robbery imputed to Rome, but the submission which the pope, in the name of his divine primacy, demanded for his false doctrines, deviating from those of Luther. This point is brought out still more clearly by his characterization of Prierias' composi-

<sup>11</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, II, 54 sq.; January 16, 1521.

tion as a heretical, blasphemous, Satanic, Tartarean poison which spreads over the whole earth. He—Prierias—infinitely outdoes Arius, Manichaeus, Pelagius, and all the other heretics. If Rome teaches the doctrine Prierias attributes to her, then fortunate Greece, fortunate Bohemia, fortunate all who have severed their relations with, and wended their own way out of, this Babylon. "Now Satan has taken even the hitherto impregnable fortress of Sion, Sacred Scripture, the tower of David. Fare thee well, thou unfortunate, lost, and blasphemous Rome, the wrath of God has come upon thee." "We wished to heal Babylon, now let us abandon it, that it may become the abode of dragons, ghosts, specters, witches, and that it be what its name indicates—an eternal confusion, full of the idols of avarice, perjurors, apostates, priapists, robbers, simonists, and countless hordes of other monsters, a new pantheon of impiety!"

Those who censured his frenzy he referred to the inflammatory and vehement language of his opponents. But all these combined did not approach the horrible bitterness and the resounding fury of his own effusions. As the *Epitome* of Prierias was free from reproach in this respect, so, too, the writings of Eck, Emser, Alfeld, and the earlier productions of Tetzel were actually moderate in comparison with Luther's. Rome itself had not proceeded against him with excommunication. The Holy See and the bishops had as yet taken no steps against him, which might have conjured up such frenzy. His outbreaks proceeded from his temperament. The cause lay deeper than is usually supposed; it has been partly revealed in the previous remarks about his psychology. It will be made still more apparent by the events of the momentous year 1520.

In the meantime events led to other outbursts of his vehement polemic. In conformity with their position and custom, the faculties of Cologne and Louvain had rejected a number of propositions extracted from his writings. He published a Latin *Responsio*, in which he proposed to demonstrate the vanity and nullity of such academic verdicts in general. Until they would refute him, he says, he would regard their condemnation as one does the imprecations of a drunken wench. The professors of Louvain and Cologne he characterized as "asses" in a letter to Spalatin.<sup>12</sup>

In other writings he undertakes to discuss practical questions. The

<sup>12</sup> Weimar ed., VI, pp. 174 sqq.; *Opp. Lat. Var.*; IV, pp. 176 sqq.

little book on "How to Confess"<sup>13</sup> asked the question whether it was obligatory to confess all secret sins known only to the sinner himself. The author denounces the practice of auricular confession in general as a means of avarice and tyranny.

In a *Sermon on the Blessed Sacrament*<sup>14</sup> he acknowledges the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but questions whether it takes place in virtue of transubstantiation, or whether the bread is present simultaneously with the body of Christ. The manner in which he presents the subject amounts to a denial of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. One may not assume, he says, that this Sacrament is a work *per se* pleasing to God (*ex opere operato*); he maintains, on the contrary, that the work of salvation is wrought by the faith of Christians who are united about this Sacrament, and by that believing conviction of salvation which is nurtured and inflamed by this holy bread as the sign of Christ's Testament. It would be becoming and goodly, he adds, if this Sacrament were dispensed to Christians in the twofold form of bread and wine, and not merely under one species; for it was instituted by Christ under both and should be so ordained by a council of the Church. In this exposition, he did not consider the weighty reasons which had determined the Church in the course of centuries to administer this Sacrament under one form only—a measure which is advocated by many Protestants to-day for hygienic reasons. The Church has always taught that Christ is present whole and entire in, and consumed under, each form, and that the Sacrament is but "partially" present under the form of bread.

The demand for both forms was destined to prove a powerful means for the introduction of the new religion.

The first opposition to this presumptuous demand was made by the bishop of Meissen, John von Schleinitz. In a decree published on January 24, 1520, he ordered the sequestration of Luther's work *On the Sacrament*, and commanded the clergy to inform the people of the reason why, as recently as the fifth Lateran Council, the Church adhered to the decrees which ordained the administration of the Eucharist under one form only. It is worthy of note that this

<sup>13</sup> Weimar ed., VI, pp. 157 sqq.; *Opp. Lat. Var.*, IV, pp. 154 sqq.

<sup>14</sup> Weimar ed., II, pp. 742 sqq.; Erlangen ed., XXVII, p. 28, of the year 1519, with the supplements in Luther's "*Verklärung etlicher Artikel*," Weimar ed., VI, p. 78; Erlangen ed., p. 70, of the year 1520.

was the first public declaration of a German bishop against Luther. The decree was issued in the name of the bishop with the advice and approbation of the cathedral chapter of Meissen. This procedure angered Luther and he at once published two replies, one in German, the other in Latin. To be able to attack the bishop with less restraint, he asserted that the author of the decree, which had been issued at Stolpe, could not possibly be a bishop; that the stupid note had made its appearance quite appropriately during the Lenten season, and that the author probably lost his reason in the carnival. He insisted that the use of the chalice was "an open question."

Luther, as so often happened to him when engaged in controversy, went even further, with fatal results. He discussed the abrogation of clerical celibacy in a manner enticing to the clergy who had taken sides with him or who were undecided in their attitude. Thus he says: "What if I were to say that it appears proper to me that a council should once more permit priests engaged in the cure of souls to have wives? Behold, the Greek priests have wives, and what good man to-day would not, out of sympathy for our own priests, wish that they would enjoy the same liberty, in view of the dangers and scandals that beset them?"

The court of the Saxon Elector now became deeply concerned over Luther's attacks upon the Saxon episcopate and the aggravation of the controversy within the Church. In order to restrain the assailant in the name of the Elector, Spalatin entered upon a more intensive correspondence with Luther, in the course of which the latter revealed even more clearly the illusions under which he labored. He said he did not comprehend the counsels of peace which Spalatin addressed to him. Why did Christ make him a doctor? He was acting in conformity with the will of God and his vocation. He must permit himself to be directed by God, as the ship is driven by winds and waves. The Word of God could not progress without strife, profound agitation, and danger. Let Spalatin caution his raving opponents to be considerate towards him, lest the filth which they had stirred up emit an even greater stench. If he, Luther, permitted himself to be led by human wisdom, it would be a different matter; but his cause had not been prompted by the judgment of men. God carried him along; let Him see to it what He would accomplish through him; he himself had not chosen the task which he must now perform. It was true that he was more violent than necessity called for; but

who can observe moderation when he is angry? He feels that his blood boiling, but he is at least plain and frank, etc.<sup>15</sup> It was not difficult for him to admit his violent emotion; but how was he going to prove that he was guided by God? He made no attempt to prove this; he simply felt the divine guidance as anyone else might.

During all these trials he looked with unrest and anxiety toward Rome, whence the ban could not fail to come.

He judged that it would be advantageous for him to prepare the minds of the people for this event by publishing a German tract entitled *A Sermon on the Ban*.<sup>16</sup> He had previously issued a similar work, *On the Validity of the Ban*. His cardinal theme is this: An unjust excommunication (such as he is looking forward to) does not separate a man from communion with Christ, nor deprive him of the intercession and "all the good works of Christendom." It is rather "a noble and great merit before God, and blessed is he who dies unjustly excommunicated." "Christians should learn," he continues, "to love the ban rather than to hate it, just as we are taught by Christ not to fear, but to love punishment, pain, and death." Although he preaches respect for ecclesiastical authority, he expatiates excitedly on the prevalent abuses of the ban and says one may not be astounded that at times the ecclesiastical judges are bloodily avenged by evil-doers, through God's permission. The secular authorities should not tolerate certain abuses of the ban in their countries and among their people.

The Roman curia had too long deferred determined action for political reasons. Luther's writings, which issued in rapid succession from Wittenberg, some of them in inflammatory German for dissemination among the masses, others in learned Latin for the outside world, had ample time to prepare the way for the coming defection. The lamentable delay of a firm decision was attributable to the negligence of the German episcopate, no less than to the illusions to which the learned circles in Germany and abroad, who had been educated in

<sup>15</sup> *Briefwechsel*, II, p. 294: "Quis rogavit Dominum, ut me doctorem crearet? Si creavit, habeat sibi aut rursum destruat, si poenitent creasse," etc.—*Ibid.*, p. 323: "Esto novum et magnum sit futurum incendium; quis potest Dei consilio resistere?" *Ibid.*, p. 325: "Non patiar damnatum errorem in evangelio Dei pronuntiari etiam ab universis angelis," etc.—*Ibid.* p. 327: "Ne praesumeres, rem istam tuo, meo, aut ullius hominum iudicio coeptam."—*Ibid.* p. 328: "Verbum Dei, ut Amos ait, ursus in via et laena in silva. . . . Sic Deus me rapit; qui viderit quid faciat per me," etc.—Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 109 sqq.

<sup>16</sup> Weimar ed., VI, pp. 63, 75 sqq.; Erlangen ed., XXVII, pp. 51 sqq.

a one-sided Humanism, were subject concerning the reform movement. Everything conspired to enable the great controversy to vest itself all too long with the character of an undecided issue.

## 2. CONCLUSION OF THE ROMAN TRIAL

The written representations which Dr. Eck made at Rome after the Leipsic disputation, and the efforts of the Dominicans at last caused final proceedings against Luther to be initiated at the curia. They began before Eck's arrival in the Eternal City. The report of the disputation and the opinions of the theological faculties of Louvain and Cologne did not fail to make a deep impression on the Pope and his entourage. Crotus Rubeanus testifies that even prior to this, and despite various delays, the Lutheran affair was by no means regarded with levity by the Roman curia. With the aid of these official documents, the difficulties were at last surmounted which ignorance of the German language had placed in the way of a proper appreciation of the numerous productions of Luther's pen.

On January 9, 1520, the first consistory met to initiate definite proceedings. Cardinal Cajetan, a theological expert of the first rank, and Cardinal Pietro Accolti, usually called Anconitanus, a distinguished jurist, were particularly active in the formulation of the charges against Luther and his Elector, against whom proceedings were at that time contemplated as an abettor of heresy. With the active participation of these two Cardinals, the matter was debated from February to the middle of March by a commission of theologians and representatives of monastic orders. A smaller commission, under the presidency of Pope Leo himself, then drafted the Bull, containing 41 theses of Luther which had been selected for condemnation. Eck, upon his arrival at the end of March, rendered substantial assistance by the clarifications which he brought. The erroneous opinion of many who were unacquainted with the question at issue may be gathered from the fact that, as late as May, 1521, some at Rome held that the publication of a solemn Bull against Luther would be more damaging than useful, and that the scandal in Germany would only increase if it appeared that so much importance was attached to the new errors.

Knowledge of the proceedings filtered out and reached Luther at Wittenberg. He became alarmed. Among the peculiar opinions which

accompanied the report was this, that special difficulties existed, because the necessary proofs against Luther had to be gathered from Holy Writ.<sup>17</sup>

When, at the end of April, the commission had finished its labors, its conclusions were presented to the Cardinals for their final decision. The matter was decided after four consistorial sessions. Cardinal Cajetan had recommended that the forty-one theses be specified in strict theological form, together with the condemnation that attached to each thesis, such as heretical, false, scandalous, etc. The majority, however, were in favor of condemning the theses as a whole, without definitely qualifying each separately, following the example of the Council of Constance when it condemned the errors of Wiclif and Hus. The commission, moreover, unanimously resolved that the forthcoming Bull should be principally a condemnation of the false teachings of Luther, whereas a solemn excommunication from the Church with its attendant temporal consequences was to be pronounced against Luther personally only after the expiration of a certain period of time to be granted to him for the purpose of reconsidering his position.

At the final consistory, Leo X definitely resolved to promulgate the Bull which commenced with the words: "*Exurge Domine et iudica causam tuam.*" It was despatched on June 15, 1520.<sup>18</sup>

Most solemn is the introduction to this memorable document, which, in lieu of an address, was superscribed with the customary formula: "*Leo episcopus, servus servorum Dei, ad perpetuam rei memoriam.*" "Arise, O Lord"—thus it begins—"arise and distinguish Thy cause, be mindful of the insult which foolish men have heaped upon Thee without intermission. . . . Arise, O Peter, and, mindful of the pastoral office entrusted to thee by God, be thou solicitous of the Holy Roman Church, the mother of all churches and the teacher of the faith which thou hast consecrated with thy blood at the command of God. . . . Arise thou also, O Paul, we beseech thee, thou who by thy teaching and martyrdom hast become the resplendent light of the Church. . . . Let the whole multitude of the Saints arise, and the universal Church, whose true understanding of Sacred Scriptures is condemned and trampled under foot," etc.

<sup>17</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. I, p. 48; Vol. II, pp. 45-47.

<sup>18</sup> Text in Raynaldus, *Annales*, a. 1520, n. 51 and a somewhat inferior reprint in the *Bullar. Rom.*, ed. Taurin., t. V, pp. 748 sqq. Another reprint, with odious and alien interpolations, in Luther's *Opp. Lat. Var.*, IV, pp. 264 sqq. The 41 condemned theses are reprinted in Denzinger's *Enchiridion*, 26th ed., 1928, pp. 257 sqq.

There follows the condemnation of the forty-one theses, which are specifically designated, without mentioning Luther's name.

Then the Bull proceeds directly against Luther and prohibits his writings, in which "these (forty-one) theses and many other errors are contained." These writings are to be forthwith sought out everywhere and burnt publicly and solemnly in the presence of the clergy and the people. Luther himself is ordered to recant officially, or to appear personally at Rome within sixty days for the purpose of recanting, being given the assurance of a safe papal escort; otherwise the solemn excommunication was to become automatically effective against him with all the consequences established by law. The term of sixty days was to be computed from the time when the Bull was publicly nailed to the doors of the Lateran, the apostolic chancery, and the cathedral churches of Brandenburg, Meissen, and Merseburg.

Luther is reminded of the former citation, when he had been promised a letter of safe-conduct, a friendly reception, nay, even compensation for the expenses of his journey, and of his defiant attitude for more than a year, regardless of the ecclesiastical censures which he had incurred by his appeal to an ecumenical council in violation of the constitutions of Pius II and Julius II, who had prohibited such an appeal under penalties fixed for heretics. Hence, proceedings could be instituted against him forthwith as one "notoriously suspect of heresy, nay, a true heretic." Still, mindful of the mercy of almighty God, all the insults which he had heaped upon the Pope and the Apostolic See would be forgiven him if he would repent, and the Pope would receive him back lovingly, as the prodigal son in the parable was received by his father.

At the same time, however, Luther is firmly reminded of the consequences attendant upon disobedience as implied in the great excommunication and prescribed by medieval and canon law. In this respect the Bull is strictly in line with ancient tradition. It mentions, furthermore, that it was the "illustrious German nation" which had distinguished itself by its loyal and energetic defense of the faith in the past; that the German emperors, with the approbation of the popes, had promulgated the severest edicts for the expulsion and extirpation of heretics throughout their realm, that they had forfeited the territory and sovereignty of all who protected heretics or refused to expel them. (This was a strong reminder to the Elector Frederick of Saxony.) Although there were no certain prospects of success, the Bull was intended as a reminder of the ancient and severe norms of the Christian family of nations, now confronted with the greatest menace to religion that history had ever recorded. Accordingly, all accomplices of Luther, as well as all who received him, were subject to "the penalties provided by law" for insubordination. Under pain of spiritual penalties, all who were invested with authority, in the spiritual as well as in the secular realm, including the highest Christian princes, were commanded to appre-

hend the monk of Wittenberg, if he proved obstinate, and his abettors, and to have them sent to Rome, or, at least, to expel them from their domiciles. All localities in which the excommunicates resided, were to be under the interdict, *i. e.*, closed for divine service as long as they abided there, and for three days after their departure.

Upon the termination of the above-mentioned respite of sixty days, a proclamation was to be issued in all churches to the effect that Luther and all who remained disobedient were to be shunned by all as declared and condemned heretics; and the Bull "*Exurge*" was to be read and posted everywhere. All transcriptions of the Bull which were made and subscribed by a notary public as well as all printed copies coming from Rome and bearing the seal of an ecclesiastical prelate, were to be regarded as authentic.<sup>19</sup>

Whether Dr. Eck approved all of these penal paragraphs, borrowed from medieval and curialistic tradition, we have no means of knowing. Relative to the selection and arrangement of the forty-one condemned propositions he later expressed certain wishes. Of the Bull in its entirety he heartily approved and assumed the commission, conferred upon him by the Pope, of promulgating it in Germany and securing its observance wherever possible.

Among the principal doctrines which were declared heretical or otherwise worthy of condemnation in the forty-one propositions, are Luther's errors concerning the utter impotence of man to do good, fiduciary faith, justification and grace, the hierarchy and the Church, the efficacy of the Sacraments, Purgatory, Penance, and indulgences. The denial of the authority of the pope and of general councils—the centre of the position which Luther adopted—was sharply and decisively rejected. Thus, this doctrinal utterance of the Holy See was a magnificent manifesto for the orientation of all Christendom. Once more the Apostolic See, in spite of the disturbances caused in the papal curia by the Renaissance and political intrigues, proved itself a beacon light amidst the errors that beset society at this critical juncture. For the rest, the Pope in the Bull "*Exurge*" does not descend to a refutation of the various condemned errors, but adheres to the ancient custom of the Apostolic See. Luther's doctrines had been tested in the light of Sacred Scripture and tradition and the Pope solemnly

<sup>19</sup> The only extant copy of the three originals of the Bull was found in 1920 in the State Archives of Württemberg at Stuttgart. About nineteen original prints are known, of which an account is given by Schottenloher in the *Zeitschrift für Bücherfreunde*, N. F., Vol. IX, No. 2, p. 201.

appeals to the promise of the Divine Saviour to abide with His Church "all days, even to the consummation of the world," and protect her from error. He appeals, finally, to the power conferred upon the Holy See in Blessed Peter and to his authority as the head of the faithful, which bound him to provide for the peace and concord of the Church.

If modern sensitiveness takes offense at some forceful phrases of the Bull, it should be borne in mind that these are almost all passages from Holy Writ which, in conformity with the usage of the papal court, were invoked against heresy as the greatest of all evils. Thus in the introduction of the Bull, which is so frequently criticized by Protestants, the Supreme Pontiff interweaves a number of Biblical texts, such as: Fools cast opprobrium upon God, foxes sought to devastate the vineyard of the Lord, "the boar out of the wood hath laid it waste, and a singular wild beast hath devoured it."

The condemnation of Luther's two propositions concerning the execution of heretics and the Turkish wars has likewise given offense to modern writers, but without reason.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. THE SO-CALLED TWO GREAT REFORMATION PAMPHLETS OF LUTHER

The reports of his forthcoming condemnation by the Holy See threw Luther into feverish agitation. Notwithstanding his new ideas,

<sup>20</sup> The condemned 33rd thesis of Luther says: "*Haereticos comburi est contra voluntatem Spiritus.*" On the meaning of this condemnation, which has given such grave offense to modern writers, see N. Paulus in the *Histor.-pol. Blätter*, Vol. 140 (1907), pp. 357 sqq. Dr. Paulus says that, although the Bull "*Exurge*" is a so-called ex-cathedra decision, not all the condemned theses are "heretical." Relative to the 33rd thesis, it is sufficient to assume the qualification "scandalous" (*scandalosa*), which means not that the proposition is false, but only that it has some other quality deserving of disapproval. Even if the predicate "false" were to be applied to it, the meaning nevertheless would not be that to burn heretics was a work pleasing to the Holy Ghost, but only that it was not contrary to the will of God, etc. But the censure "scandalous" or "objectionable" suffices. "Such propositions as are objectionable or provocative of scandal at any given time and rightly censured as such, may well cease to be objectionable at another time and under different circumstances, and in that case the censure ceases without further ado as no longer possessing a purpose" (p. 364). This will be conceded by all, even those who, with the older theologians, look upon the medieval penalties for heretics as founded upon the public conditions then prevalent in State and Church. Paulus reminds his readers that Luther himself, in later life, and the Protestant theologians of the 16th century, acknowledged and demanded the death penalty for heretics.—The 34th condemned proposition of Luther is on a par with the 33rd: "To go to war against the Turks is to resist God, who punishes our iniquities through them." "To-day circumstances are quite different" from what they were in the age of the Turkish wars and of the Bull "*Exurge*." (Paulus, p. 367).

the solemn ban constituted a blow which stirred the depths of his soul, and which was calculated to alienate from him for all time many of his adherents among the German people and abroad. In this frame of mind, moved by fear and hatred, he composed two vehement polemical pamphlets which were intended to meet the threatening evil and to weaken, as much as possible, the effects of the sentence about to be passed upon him. For he had no intention of bowing his proud head.

The first, written in German, was entitled, "[*An Address*] to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation on the Improvement of the Christian Estate." The second, composed in Latin, bore the title, "*On the Babylonish Captivity of the Church.*"

In "To the Nobility,"<sup>21</sup> he addressed the estates of the Empire, especially the governing high nobility, and with inflammatory words summoned them to intervene against the sins and crimes which the Roman curia was perpetrating against the Germans and all Christendom. With the most circumstantial detail he delineates the real or alleged abuses, the perfectly infernal measures which, so he alleged, were being adopted at Rome for the sake of gaining wealth and power, at the expense of German purses and German honor. But he also unreservedly proclaims doctrines destructive of the Church as such. Thus he proclaims that the distinction between the clerical and the secular state is but a hypocritical invention, since all men are priests in virtue of Baptism; that the hierarchy must be removed, if necessary by force; and that the civil authorities have power over it. The office of the temporal authority, to punish the wicked and to protect the good, he exclaims, should be exercised throughout Christendom without let or hindrance, even though it strike priests, bishops, or popes. It is the boast of Luther's Protestant biographers that he thus "laid the foundation for the right of civil authority within Christendom."<sup>22</sup> It would be more correct to say: he indicated the path that led to an intolerable amalgamation of spiritual and temporal power. The Church is reduced to servility. In case of necessity, according to Luther, the civil authority even has the right to convoke a council; indeed, "as a true member of the whole body, and one able to do so most effectively, it should provide a truly free council, which

<sup>21</sup> Werke, Weimar ed., VI, 381 sq.; Erlangen ed., XXI, pp. 274 sqq. Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 26 sq., 31 sq.

<sup>22</sup> Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, I, p. 322.

no one is so competent to achieve as the temporal sword, especially since they are now also fellow-Christians, fellow-priests, and fellow-spirituals.”<sup>23</sup>

Twenty-five sections of this polemical tract Luther devotes to the evils of the ecclesiastical estate, and an additional section to the injuries inflicted upon the temporal public life. Hence, the deficiencies of the Church, which he assumes the right to reform, constitute the principal burden of this pamphlet. Essentially, however, it contains scarcely anything of importance which he had not previously set forth or at least touched upon. The facts which it stated had already been acknowledged by individual churchmen and even in public gravamina. The Protestant historian Johann Haller remarks: “This is probably the least original of Luther’s writings.”<sup>24</sup> On the other hand untrue assertions are propounded with so much exaggeration, that the very language in which they were expressed must have prejudiced against them all who thought dispassionately. At every turn the scare-crow of the papal Antichrist is visible in the background. This Antichrist, according to the prophecy of Daniel (XI, 8, 43), must acquire the treasures of the world and destroy everything. Indeed, “most of the popes were devoid of faith”!

One of the tricks employed by Luther to gain adherents was his declaration to the monasteries that he judged they should “become free, everyone to remain as long as he pleased,” whereas now every monastery was a life prison for its poor inmates.

His audacious attack upon sacerdotal celibacy, to which “the poor priests,” as he puts it, were bound by canon law, must have been an equally effective means of augmenting his strength among the clergy. He would “freely open his mouth, no matter whether it displease pope, bishop or anyone else,” and demand that priests be not compelled to live without a legitimate wife, as they now are by virtue of an institution introduced by the devil through the pope. By means of this device, he asserted, the pope subjected the clergy to his avaricious power. “O Christ, my Lord, look down, let the day of judgment come and destroy the devil’s nest at Rome! There is seated the man of whom Paul has said [2 Thess. II, 3 sq.], he shall be lifted up above Thee, and sitteth in Thy temple, shewing himself as if he were a God.”

Thus he justifies his provocative summons to the high addressees of his

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Die Ursachen der Reformation*, Tübingen, 1917, p. 5.

book, whom he exhorts: "If we are to attack the Turks, let us begin at home, where they are most harmful. If it is just that we hang thieves and decapitate robbers, why should we allow to go unscathed Roman greed, the greatest thief and robber who has been or may ever be on earth?"

Luther's "Address to the Nobility" became the most widely read of his works and has remained so up to the present time. Even where the rest of his books have long ago fallen into oblivion, this work is still read as a masterly product of the terrific force which that tribune of the people wielded by his popular invective. It was a trumpet of war that resounded throughout Germany, as Luther's friend, John Lang, expressed himself in a letter. Toward "others who were close to him, Luther had to defend himself against the charge that he sounded the call to revolt."<sup>25</sup> Conservative Protestants severely criticize this "demagogical book." "It is now fairly conceded," says one of them, "that Luther, in this book, exceeded the bounds within which it was his duty to keep." These critics are horrified at its "revolutionary admixture." The course pursued by Luther, says, e. g., F. J. Stahl, "was verily gigantic, even in its negations."<sup>26</sup>

Luther at that time hoped for an intervention of the worldly power. But it failed to eventuate, and as a consequence, his mind, now aroused by illusions, suffered a disappointment which he soon admits. For this reason he begins to pursue his object by other means.<sup>27</sup> Superficially considered, the reforms proposed in the "Address to the Nobility" appear very fruitful, but when they are closely examined, they prove to be largely the fruit of the prepossessions of an inexperienced monk. In the course of this work his attacks gradually grow more violent and his style more acrid. This is to be ascribed

<sup>25</sup> Theo. Kolde, *Martin Luther*, Gotha, 1884, Vol. I, p. 256.

<sup>26</sup> Stahl, *Die lutherische Kirche und die Union*, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1860, pp. 17 sq. Stahl also coined the phrase "revolutionary admixture." H. Vorreiter is even more severe in his criticism (*Luther's Ringen mit den antichristlichen Prinzipien der Revolution*, Halle, 1860). According to him Luther's "Address to the Nobility" is far more destructive than constructive. His refusal to sever connections with the revolutionary Frankish knights was a decisive deviation from the path of sound and successful reform (pp. 300 sqq.; 369 sqq.; 377 sqq.; 392 sq.). Leo, Kliefoth, and other Protestants have expressed themselves in a similar manner, and they are not alone, but have supporters on the Protestant "left."

<sup>27</sup> Cf. P. Drews, *Entsprach das Staatskirchentum Luthers Ideen?* The views of Karl Holl (*Luther*, 2nd and 3rd ed., pp. 326 sqq.) on the "Address to the Nobility" are to be received with caution, as this writer interprets the writings of Luther with a view of justifying his conduct. Luther was neither always deliberate in his actions nor did he always "remain true" to himself, as Holl would have us believe.

to the circumstance that, in the course of the work, the author became more and more exasperated at the reports from Rome demanding his surrender.

It is probable that the encouragement of the neo-Humanists and the offers of the revolutionary knights, which reached him about this time, contributed to the presumptuous tone of the book. Above all the frivolous and rebellious Ulrich von Hutten endeavored to make common cause with him. Hutten had written to Melanchthon that Franz von Sickingen, a famous mercenary chieftain and notoriously the greatest swashbuckler of the age, who harbored revolutionary ideas similar to those of Hutten, was prepared to protect Luther in his castles if necessary. The Franconian knight Sylvester of Schaumburg also promised to aid Luther until his case was decided and wrote to him that he would place at his disposal a hundred noblemen for his protection.<sup>28</sup> Luther would not have run true to form if such promises had not inspired him with increased boldness. On July 17, 1520, he wrote to Spalatin: "Schaumburg and Franz von Sickingen have insured me against the fear of men; the wrath of the demons is now about to come."<sup>29</sup> And in a letter to his friend Wenceslaus Link, the Augustinian, he thus expresses his triumphant confidence: "To such an extent is the fury of the Romans disregarded by the Germans."<sup>30</sup> He now counseled the court of the Elector of Saxony to write the Pope that Luther had many friends in Germany who would protect him, despite all bans that might be fulminated against him, in the event that he should be driven from Wittenberg.

It was his intention to leave Wittenberg, he averred, in order not to embarrass the Saxon Elector. Nevertheless he was quite certain that Frederick would declare that the university could not dispense with him, and that the controversy would have to be decided by a council. The representations which the Elector had meanwhile made to Rome did not effect any interruption in the proceedings. When writing to Staupitz, not long after, Luther boasted that not only Hutten and many others had written valiantly in his defense, "but also our prince proceeds wisely, faithfully and, at the same time, steadfastly."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 4 sqq.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Letter of July 20, *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 8.

Prior to the arrival of the Bull of excommunication in Germany Luther, at the advice of the Elector, addressed a letter to Charles V, in which he sought to induce him to extend his protection to him, entirely innocent as he was, against the machinations of his enemies.<sup>32</sup> This letter with the supplement ("Oblation or Protestation") which Luther appended to it, is an example of that political art of concealment of which the correspondence of Luther with Spalatin and the court of Frederick offers so many examples.<sup>33</sup> Luther at once published it together with the "Oblation," in Latin for the benefit of readers in other countries.

In the "Oblation" Luther asserts his submission to the holy Catholic Church, as whose devoted son, he says, he wishes with the help of God to live and to die.

To the Emperor, however, he writes that he was forced to go before the public contrary to his wishes, that the hidden life of the cell was the supreme ideal of his life, and that his only desire was to serve the truth against those who in their frenzy disdained it. "In vain do I plead for forgiveness, in vain do I offer to observe silence, in vain do I propose conditions of peace, in vain do I demand to be better instructed." To obtain such instructions and to be convinced by proofs supplied by competent judges, he now appeals to the emperor, before whom, as the king of kings, he humbly appears as an "insignificant flea."

Charles V tore up this letter with his own hands at the diet of Worms. It deserved no better fate, especially in view of the subsequent events.

Towards the end of August, when Luther had signed his letter to the Emperor, he had already in print a part of a second polemical tract, which ranks worthily beside his "Appeal to the Nobility." It was his Latin work *De Captivitate Babylonica*.<sup>34</sup> In the introduction to this work he declared the papacy to be the empire of Babylon, and repudiated the hierarchy and the entire visible Church. According to this book, the Church has been delivered into Babylonian captivity because her doctrines have been falsified and her Sacraments held in bondage. To her falsehoods he opposes his own teachings, derived

<sup>32</sup> August 30, 1520; Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 15 sqq.

<sup>34</sup> Werke, Weimar ed., Vol. VI, pp. 484 sqq., Erlangen ed., Opp. Lat. Var., V, pp. 13 sqq.; Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 27.

from the Word of God. He is, for the present, concerned chiefly with dogma. Because of its Latin garb, this book, intended for scholars and foreigners, is not composed in the style of its predecessor, but is prolix and ponderous, as it is intended to be a scientific attack upon the doctrines of the Church.

In his denial of particular dogmas the author advances beyond his previous position, quite in conformity with the principle laid down by him, that if one meets with contradictions, one should advance all the more boldly! The opponents are to be confused and overwhelmed by new assertions.

Above all, the holy Sacraments are to be rescued from the captivity of the papacy. It is an unfortunate and injurious error to hold that there are seven. There are only three, namely, Baptism, Penance and the Eucharist, and these are efficacious through faith alone. As regards the Eucharist, the doctrine of Transubstantiation must be rejected; the bread remains unchanged, only Christ becomes simultaneously present with it. Christ did not prescribe the reception of the Sacrament. The denial of the chalice to the laity is a mutilation of the Eucharistic banquet. The Mass is no sacrifice; nay, not even a meritorious work. The commandments of the Church are contrary to freedom. The Church may not invite vows. Since the so-called Sacrament of Matrimony is a fraud, the entire marriage law must be abolished. The celibacy of the clergy is a damnable institution. And so forth.

It is not worth while to follow up these assertions in detail. They are the fragments of the foundation which Luther had wrecked by his denial of the authority of the Church.

It is more important to establish the fact that he is approaching a complete disintegration without being aware of the fact. With closed eyes he blows up ecclesiastical and religious subordination and the certain outward tradition of positive truth. "Neither the pope, nor a bishop, nor any one else," he declares in his zeal for destruction, "has the right to impose even a syllable upon any Christian without his consent." He deduces this freedom of the faithful solely from Baptism and its obligations toward God and laments "that few know this splendor of Baptism and this boon of Christian freedom." He holds, moreover, that faith originates only in the interior sense of the individual who reads the Bible under the activity of God. There is no need of Church authority; God's Word suffices to make everyone

interiorly certain. He himself claims to be conscious of such certainty. It is his opinion, though he does not express it too freely, that all inquirers will agree with him if they permit themselves to be properly directed from above. This was not the case, however, as may be seen from his subsequent bitter complaints about the hordes of sectarians and fanatics within his own church. It is a trait of the power of self-deception which was characteristic of him and which, at times, almost resembles naïveté. The book concludes with invectives against the "despotism, craftiness, and superstition" of the pope, whose adherents are characterized as filled with "stupid ferocity."

What impression did these pages make upon foreign Catholic readers, who were unable to understand the spirit of this "Teuton"? Ambrose Catharinus, a Dominican, who at that time (1520) had already composed his "Apology against Luther's infamous pest of doctrines," regarded Luther as the "intellectual monster" of Wittenberg. The German Franciscan, Thomas Murner, a satirically inclined antagonist of Luther, undertook to ridicule his *Babylonish Captivity* in a German translation. In the same year, 1520, another German translation of the same work was published by an adherent of the new religion, under the title, *Von der Babylonischen gefengnusz der Kirchen*.

Luther had given to his Latin work the subtitle *Præludium, i. e.*, prelude. This prelude and the concluding words indicated that it was to be regarded as the forerunner of another. The author had meanwhile been apprized of the tenor of the Bull directed against him. With the approach of the storm his soul seemed to be endowed with demoniacal power. He concludes by stating that when the Bull arrived, he would, with the help of Christ, issue a sequel "such as the Roman See has hitherto neither seen nor heard," and that the present work might be regarded as a part of his future retraction, lest tyranny appear to have puffed itself up in vain.

#### 4. AFTER THE PROMULGATION OF THE BULL

At the end of September, the papal condemnation of Luther was promulgated in the places designated in the Bull. Dr. Eck, who had been charged by the Pope with this commission, was accused by Luther's adherents of being moved by personal hostility and vindictiveness. There is no proof of such motives extant, though the selec-

tion of another person on the part of Rome would probably have been more advantageous. Yet, how many persons were there in Germany whom the Holy See could have engaged for so delicate an undertaking? As the special confidant of Rome, and as one familiar with German conditions, Eck was authorized and commissioned to designate publicly some of the most important partisans of Luther as having incurred the same papal condemnation. Among the six thus selected were Luther's colleague, Andrew Karlstadt, the celebrated Humanist, Willibald Pirkheimer of Nuremberg, and Lazarus Spengler, the town clerk of that city. On October 3, Eck sent the papal Bull to the University of Wittenberg together with a polemic treatise, composed by himself, on the Council of Constance and on certain doctrines which Luther had advocated in his *Address to the Nobility*.

On September 28, Luther, having obtained definite knowledge of the arrival of the Bull in Germany, wrote a letter to Canon Günther von Bünau of Merseburg, in which he declared his intention to ridicule the *bulla* or *ampulla* as an empty bubble.<sup>35</sup> About the middle of October, he published a small tract, *On the New Eckian Bulls and Lies*, in which, contrary to his better knowledge, he asserted that there was no Bull, intimating that it must be another lie or forgery on the part of Eck.<sup>36</sup> This was a political move, designed to evade the blow for the time being, and to create sentiment in his behalf.

Soon afterwards he completed another highly significant German treatise, of which Miltitz sent a printed copy to Pirkheimer, on November 16, while Luther was working on a somewhat enlarged Latin version. It was his famous treatise *On the Liberty of a Christian*. This treatise also appeared in German.<sup>37</sup> Protestant writers esteem it as the third so-called "great document of the Reformation," co-ordinate with the *Address to the Nobility* and the treatise *On the Babylonish Captivity*. The little work, we are told, embodies Luther's fundamental ideas and, in its "matured and exquisite presentation," ranks equal to "the noblest productions of German mysticism."<sup>38</sup> Luther sent a Latin version to the Pope, accompanied by a

<sup>35</sup> *Briefwechsel*, II, p. 482.

<sup>36</sup> *Werke*, Weimar ed., Vol. VI, pp. 579 sqq.; Erlangen ed., XXIV<sup>2</sup>, pp. 17 sqq.

<sup>37</sup> German version, Weimar ed., Vol. VII, pp. 20 sqq.; Erlangen ed., Vol. XXVII, pp. 175 sqq. Latin version, Weimar ed., VII, pp. 39 sqq., *Opp. Lat. Var.*, IV, pp. 206 sqq.

<sup>38</sup> Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, I, p. 363.

letter which he also prefixed to the original edition. This step was taken at the advise of the fantastic Miltitz, who also caused Luther to date this letter as of September 6, whereas it had actually been composed on October 13. It was intended to create the impression that the document was composed prior to the promulgation of the papal Bull, and hence was not influenced by his condemnation. In this way Luther was able to assume a more peaceable air, with the result that he gained sympathizers and disposed the masses against the ban.

It was peace, he told the Pope, that he had aimed at from the beginning; he had earned the "favor and gratitude" of Rome for his resistance to Eck and other knaves. He had always spoken most respectfully of the person of Pope Leo, whose reputation no one could assail; in his generosity the Pope should restrain his enemies, among whom Eck was the worst on account of his insane ambition. "But, that I should recant my doctrines, that cannot be"; "the Word of God, which teaches all liberty, shall not be made captive."

The author again indulges in his usual descriptions of the corruption of the papal court; the papacy, he says, is no longer in existence; poor Leo sits like a sheep amidst wolves, and like Daniel among the lions; the Roman Church is a "den of assassins worse than all others, and a house of knaves more roguish than all the rest."

This letter, ostensibly intended for the Pope, but in reality for the masses, on whom Luther definitely counted, constitutes the introduction to his work *On the Liberty of a Christian*, by means of which he purposed to set forth "the sum-total of the Christian life," consisting in faith, *i. e.*, trust in God. Such faith produces a splendid good, the true freedom of a Christian. He says he had acquired this faith himself amid great and manifold interior storms and by means of this book now intends to acquaint all "simple folk" with the value of freedom, that treasure contained in faith. He proposes to address only plain people. In the first and principal part of the work he seeks to demonstrate that a Christian, in virtue of his faith, is "a free lord over all things and subject to no one." In the second part, he asserts that "a Christian is the servant of all things and subject to everybody." The two divisions are intended to be complementary to each other.

There is a dual nature in every Christian, he maintains, one interior or spiritual, the other exterior or corporeal. Freedom is the property of the

former, servitude that of the latter. In describing the spiritual freedom which flows from faith, he opposes the alleged servile Catholic doctrine of good works, and in doing so makes use of expressions which reveal his entire new system of justification by faith alone.

"Thus, by this faith all your sins are forgiven you, all the corruption within you is overcome, and you yourself are made righteous, true, devout and at peace; all the commandments are fulfilled and you are set free from all things."

"This is Christian liberty . . . that we stand in need of no works for the attainment of piety and salvation."

"The Christian becomes by faith so exalted above all things that he is made spiritual lord of all; for there is nothing that can hinder his being saved. He may snap his fingers at the devil, and need no longer tremble before the wrath of God."<sup>39</sup>

The second part treats of the Christian as a willing servant who is subject to everybody. In as far as the Christian lives in the society of his fellow-men, he says, he must exercise himself in discipline and assist others as a matter of charity. Such good acts are a direct result of faith. Luther first discourses on the manner in which a Christian must discipline himself against the lusts of the flesh. This is followed by a discussion on the works done for the neighbor. All works are done out of the highest and purest love of God. They cause a "pure, joyful life" to dominate the soul of the Christian. Good works are not, however, performed (as the Roman Church teaches) in order that "man may become pious in the sight of God"; they are not meritorious and do not lead to salvation; we must not look to good works and think that we do well in performing many of them." "Good works never make a devout man, but a devout man performs good and pious works." He performs them even though he lovingly trusts that Christ has fulfilled all the commandments for him, and that for this reason a righteous man is in need of no law and no good works.<sup>40</sup>

Luther believed that he had adequately replied to the objection of those who said: "If faith alone is sufficient to produce piety, why are good works commanded? Would it not be better to be of good hope and do nothing?" Nevertheless, this objection naturally persisted wherever the new religion became dominant, and to the end of his life Luther combated the lax practice which prevailed among his fol-

<sup>39</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> Luther had expressed similar ideas in his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, and hence this present tract contains nothing new. Moreover, the same distinction between the interior and exterior life is found almost literally in Tauler, whose works were known to Luther,—only that Tauler leaves good works intact, nay, expressly emphasizes their meritoriousness. Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. I, pp. 229 sq.

lowers as the result of his depreciation of good works, which assumed the pseudomystical semblance of an exaltation. The abolition of the laws of the Church as a despicable means of coercion of necessity avenged itself on the masses, who promptly abused the newly proclaimed freedom of the Christian. Luther in his system forgot the earnest and emphatic exhortations of St. Paul, whose teachings he pretended to revive. Paul taught the necessity of zealously performing good works from a motive of both fear and love and in the hope of heavenly reward and forgiveness of sins. He crowned his exhortations with the words: "Be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor. XV, 58). Thus the faithful will be free, according to his teaching; not indeed, here below, but in the life to come, they will enjoy perfect liberty of spirit, there where the victory over death hath been given to us through our Lord Jesus Christ (*ibid.*, 56 sq.).

A well-known Protestant writer, speaking of the liberty which Luther wishes to discover in the hearts of believers, says: "The sublime and beatific image of the liberty of the Christian has descended upon the earth in a different manner than Luther once visioned it in golden clouds." "His ideal," the same author adds, "is not organizational or regulative," but "incomprehensible and almost unlimited"; we shall always be suspicious of such an ideal when there is question of performing the daily duties of life.<sup>41</sup> Other modern Protestant scholars, such as Köhler, Trötsch, Wernle, and Bess, have frankly criticized this *opusculum* from the same standpoint.<sup>42</sup> Some of them disagree as to the meaning of Luther's work. His Catholic contem-

<sup>41</sup> V. Naumann, *Die Freiheit Luthers*, 1919, pp. 44, 15.

<sup>42</sup> B. Bess, e. g., declares (*Zeitschrift für Kirchengesch.*, XXXVII [1917-1918], p. 526): "We must not omit to say that the fundamentation of morality in the second part signifies a limitation of Luther." R. Otto (*Das Heilige*, 7th ed., 1922, pp. 236 sq.) directs attention to the fact that the good thoughts, how to remain attached to God in trustful confidence, were extensively developed long before Luther in the Catholic mystical writings of the Middle Ages, e. g., by Albertus Magnus (*rectius* by the Benedictine John von Kastel), *De Adhaerendo Deo*. This author even says: "If we did not know that 'The Liberty of a Christian' is the work of Luther, we should probably classify it with Catholic mystic literature." Luther's errors, however, prevent this classification. The celebrated saying, "Ama et fac quod vis," is quoted by the Catholic mystics of the Middle Ages in a very different sense than that which Luther ascribes to it. On the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas concerning indifference to exterior works, see Jos. Mausbach, *Die christliche Moral*, p. 225 (tr. by A. M. Buchanan, *Catholic Moral Teaching and its Antagonists*, New York, 1914, pp. 256 sq.).

poraries (*e. g.*, Hoogstraten and Murner) attacked this imaginary freedom as a dangerous and corruptive phantom. Hoogstraten says that Luther's work on *The Liberty of a Christian* is worse than the other products of his pen, because of its seductive and insinuating style and because it is fundamentally destructive of the doctrine of good works.

The fervent mystical note which Luther frequently strikes in this work recalls his former monastic readings, especially from Tauler, and indeed is captivating. It exercised an almost hypnotic effect on the better class of his adherents. The doctrine of pious Christian liberty, though no one really understood it, became a shibboleth of marvelous power. It was a genial trait in Luther's literary career that he knew how to interlard his impetuous speeches with winning sentiments and appeals.

The above-mentioned tendency towards radicalism is also ascribed by Protestant authors to Luther's *Liberty of a Christian*. At the time of the Luther jubilee of 1917, the *Christliche Welt* of Marburg said: "From this freedom to Goethe's ideal of humanity is indeed only a short remove."<sup>43</sup> Of the liberty achieved by Luther generally the Heidelberg theologian v. Schubert says: "Whilst by their struggles men gained liberty in the supreme questions of conscience, they blazed a path for all intellectual liberty." It was by following this road that mankind arrived at enlightenment.<sup>44</sup> It will be profitable to discuss this matter a little more fully.

A remarkable picture presents itself when the three so-called great documents of the Reformation are considered as a whole under this aspect. On the one hand, there is the religious sentiment which is apparently spread over the third and wafts its fragrance back upon the two that have preceded it. On the other hand, there is an individualism which is opposed to revealed religion and every form of ecclesiastical solidarity.

In the *Address to the Nobility*, the autonomy of the individual in judging of religious doctrines, is advocated. "If we all are priests," Luther says, "how then shall we not have the right to discriminate and judge what is right or wrong in faith? . . . We should become courageous and free" in the presence of traditional doctrines. We should "judge freely, according to

<sup>43</sup> 1917, p. 690.

<sup>44</sup> *Grundzüge der Kirchengesch.*, 3rd ed., 1906, p. 234.

our understanding, of the Scriptures," and "force" the popes "to follow what is better, and not their own reason." <sup>45</sup>

Reference should be made to the expression previously quoted from the *Babylonian Captivity*, concerning the divine spirit which enlightens every man and imbues him with absolute certitude. Here we have the enthronement of subjectivism.

The doctrine of private judgment inspired by the "whisperings" of God, as Luther subsequently put it, destroys revealed religion and renders impossible the existence of a religious communion with a common creed. Nor does it pause before the body of Sacred Scripture. Luther himself, in the last-mentioned work, undermines the canon of the Bible by his distinction between those writings which manifest the truly Apostolic spirit, and, e. g., the Epistle of St. James, which contradicts his teaching on good works.

We do not mean to assert that Luther had a clear perception of the road he trod to religious nihilism. He wished to be and to remain a believing Christian, and must be vigorously defended against certain of his Neo-Protestant admirers who, in the interests of infidelity, represent the author of the *Freedom of a Christian* as a conscious champion of an undogmatic Christianity, especially in the period of his youthful vigor and the supposed Lutheran fervor. But we may well ask whether many of the expressions which he used in the first flush of revolt are not diametrically opposed to the binding duty imposed by every form of revelation, as well as to his dogmatic attitude in later years. It may also be questioned whether the demand for freedom for the individual and the right of private judgment may not have assisted in laying the foundation of a mere religious humanitarianism.

It is true, as Harnack says, that Kant, Fichte, and Goethe "are all hidden behind this Luther." <sup>46</sup>

A few words more in explanation of Luther's attitude. Luther desired and was compelled to justify his colossal revolt from the creed of a Church that had existed upwards of a thousand years. How could he, a lone individual, expect to succeed in his opposition to millions of the wisest and most excellent men of the past? He simply asserted that no communion has an established right to claim exclusive possession of the faith, but that every individual who correctly inter-

<sup>45</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 31.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. the passage from Ad. v. Harnack quoted in our *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 32. Chapter XXXIV of the fifth volume of my large work on Luther, first section, treats of Luther on his way "towards a Christianity devoid of dogma," based mainly on Protestant opinions.

prets Sacred Scripture, has precedence. Thoughtful critics perceived in this proposition the dissolution of all religion, but Luther says: Follow me, for I am certain, and accept the fragments of faith which I leave to you. That he believed and willed to be perfectly certain, must be conceded; for the protracted struggle he waged with himself, in order to attain certainty, could not, in view of his psychological disposition, be devoid of results. But when he perceived that many, influenced by his rare qualities, his firm stand, and the force of his language, admiringly accepted his opinions, the notion that he was sure of his ground became deeply imbedded in him, even though he was not always able to cope with the doubts that assailed him, as his own confessions, made both subsequently to and contemporaneously with that so-called spring-time of the Reformation, show. Nevertheless, in the introduction of his "Address to the Nobility," he finds himself "compelled to exclaim and to shout." He believes he is promoting only the glory of Christ.

Hence his concluding words, "God has forced me by them [my adversaries] to open my mouth still further." He meets with opposition, but is only confirmed thereby. "Though my cause is good, yet it must needs be condemned on earth and be justified only by Christ in heaven."<sup>47</sup>

"I feel that I am not master of myself (*compos mei non sum*)," he writes to a friend a few weeks later. "I am carried away and know not by what spirit."<sup>48</sup>

About this time he unburdens his mind to Staupitz, thus: "Our dearest Saviour, who has immolated Himself for us, is made an object of ridicule. I conjure you, should we not fight for Him, despite all dangers, which are greater than many believe? . . . With confidence I have sounded the bugles against the Roman idol and true Antichrist. The word of Christ is not the word of peace, but of the sword. . . . If you do not wish to follow me, then at least suffer me to go on and be carried away [*sine me ire et rapi*]."<sup>49</sup> Staupitz, however, deluded and undecided, had himself uttered the words: "Martinus has undertaken a difficult task and acts magnanimously, illumined by God."<sup>50</sup>

Touching on the cares of his impetuous activity, which allowed him no time for reflection at the most decisive moment of his life, Luther writes in a letter: "Labors of the most varied kind carry my thoughts in all direc-

<sup>47</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 37.

<sup>48</sup> To Konrad Pellikan, end of February, 1521. Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 52.

<sup>49</sup> *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 85; Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> Köstlin-Kawerau, *M. Luther*, I, p. 371.

## THE YEAR OF THE BAN

tions. Twice a day I have to speak in public. The revision of my commentary on the Psalms engages my attention. At the same time I am preparing sermons for the press. I am also writing against my enemies, opposing the Bull in Latin and in German, and working at my defense. Besides this I write letters to my friends. I am also obliged to receive visitors at home.”<sup>51</sup>

In this last-quoted letter he states that he was opposing the papal Bull of condemnation in Latin and in German. Encouraged by the attitude of the University and the Elector's court, which declined to promulgate the Bull, Luther at once followed up his work *On the New Eckian Bulls and Lies* with his *Adversus Execrabilem Antichristi Bullam*, also published in German, though somewhat altered, under the title *Wider die Bulle des Endchrits*.<sup>52</sup> In the Latin text he reiterates his doubts on the authenticity of the Bull, and pronounces anathema upon the authors of this “infamous blasphemy.” He volunteers to die, in the event that this damnable tyranny should actually be consummated in him. In the German version he exclaims with demoniacal fury: “What wonder if princes, nobles and laity should smite the heads of the pope, bishops, priests, and monks, and drive them from the land?”

On November 17, he renewed his appeal to a general council of the Church.<sup>53</sup>

In compliance with an order of his Elector, he forthwith undertook to compose a more learned defense of his condemned forty-one articles. It appeared in Latin and in German, about the middle of January, 1521, under the title, *Grund und Ursach aller Artikel (Assertio Omnium Articulorum)*.<sup>54</sup> “Who knows,” he says in the German edition, “whether God has not raised me up and that it behoves mankind to fear Him, lest they contemn God in me? Do we not read that God usually raised but one prophet at a time?” In an attack on free-will contained in this book he expressly teaches that “everything happens necessarily,” because ordered and effected by God. The Bible is expressly represented as the sole source of faith.

<sup>51</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 52 sqq.

<sup>52</sup> Latin text in the Weimar ed. of Luther's works, VI. pp. 597 sqq.; Erlangen ed., *Opp. Lat. Var.*, V, pp. 134 sqq.; German text in Weimar ed., VI, pp. 614 sqq.; Erl. ed., XXIV<sup>2</sup>, pp. 38 sqq.

<sup>53</sup> Weimar ed., VII, pp. 75 sqq.; Erl. ed., *Opp. Lat. Var.*, V, pp. 121 sqq.

<sup>54</sup> Latin text in Weimar ed., VII, pp. 94 sqq.; Erl. ed., *Opp. Lat. Var.*, V, pp. 156 sqq.; German in Weimar ed., VII, pp. 308 sqq.; Erl. ed., XXIV<sup>2</sup>, pp. 55 sqq.

## 5. THE FIRE ALARM

On December 10, 1520, Luther solemnly burnt the book of canon law, as he had previously announced.<sup>55</sup>

In response to a poster which Melanchthon had nailed to the door of the Wittenberg church, a large number of students and teachers assembled before the Elster Gate in the forenoon of that day. A funeral pile was built, upon which were placed the papal law books together with some Scholastic and anti-Lutheran treatises. The principal act was the burning of the book of canon law. The papal Bull was not even mentioned in the invitation. Only after the pile of books, to which a master set fire, had commenced to burn, while the students were chanting jeering songs, Luther stepped forth and cast a printed copy of the Bull of excommunication into the fire, saying: "Because thou hast destroyed (*conturbasti*) the truth of God, may the Lord consume thee in this fire. Amen." The words were almost a literary repetition of the report of the judgment visited upon the person of Achan, as related in the Book of Josue (VII, 25). A less reliable tradition reports Luther as having said: "Because thou hast grieved the holy one of the Lord, eternal fire consume thee!" and the anti-Lutheran party erroneously identified Luther with "the holy one of the Lord," whereas the expression probably referred to Christ, who is called the Holy One of the Lord in the Bible.

The burning of the book of canon law (as this act should be called in preference to the burning of the Bull of excommunication) was a sign of conflagration, symbolical of the ecclesiastical revolt which was commencing in Germany and thence was to spread throughout the world and result in civil revolution. The young men who were present, in their enthusiasm for Luther, did not suspect the far-reaching significance of the act. They sang farcical songs, and long after Luther and his friends had departed, continued their buffoonery about the funeral pyre, which they stirred up ever and anon. In the afternoon students rode about the streets of Wittenberg in a carriage, jeering a ridiculous imitation of the papal Bull. On the next day, however, Luther clearly explained the proceedings to his hearers, saying that really "the pope himself, *i. e.*, the Roman See," should have been consigned to the flames, instead of the book of canon law. The exuberant spirit of the students vented itself anew against the pope in

<sup>55</sup> For details see Grisar, *Lutherstudien*, No. 1 (1921), pp. 5 sqq.

the course of the ensuing carnival. Besides other mischievous pranks, a student vested himself like the pope, paraded in great pomp with a masked Roman curia and, according to a previous agreement, was pursued through the streets by a boisterous mob and finally arrested and brought to judgment. Luther gives an account of this affair with characteristic satisfaction.<sup>56</sup>

In consequence of the intervention of Rome, the number of students at the University had at first decreased slightly. But soon afterwards Spalatin found that Luther's lectures were attended by nearly four hundred hearers, Melanchthon's by from five to six hundred.<sup>57</sup> Despite the Bull of excommunication the fame of Wittenberg increased greatly throughout Germany. Many never obtained a correct knowledge of the Bull, and still less of the reasons for the condemnation. After the termination of the respite which had been granted Luther for the purpose of recantation, the Pope promulgated a new Bull, "Decet," dated January 3, 1521, which announced that the ban had gone into effect and contained exhortations to the faithful. On June 12, Luther's writings and a wooden statue of him were consigned to the flames at Rome. In conformity with ancient custom the scene was enacted in the Campo dei Fiori, where the statue of Giordano Bruno now stands.<sup>58</sup>

The proceedings at Rome found no particular echo in Germany, for which indolence the episcopate was chiefly to blame. Too many of the noble lords who held episcopal sees had other interests at heart than meeting hostile attacks upon the Church, which some of them failed to understand, while others feared to promulgate the papal Bull and take corresponding measures. Yet their dioceses were founded upon that very canon law which Luther had consigned to the flames and which formed the basis of the entire ecclesiastical life of the past and of all western civilization. If the flames of Wittenberg could not enkindle the zeal of the bishops, the latter should at least have learned a lesson from the following work of Luther: *Why the Books of the Pope and his Disciples have been burnt by Dr. Martin Luther.* In this work, which appeared in both German and

<sup>56</sup> According to Köstlin-Kawerau, *Luther*, I, p. 375; cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 51 sqq.

<sup>57</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 50 sqq.

<sup>58</sup> Kalkhoff in the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, XI (1914), pp. 165 sq. Cf. *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XXV (1904), p. 578.

Latin,<sup>59</sup> fundamental attacks upon the Church alternate with revolting misrepresentations. Never did the lack of ecclesiastical loyalty in the majority of the episcopate prove more fatally injurious to the German Church than in those decisive days. Not until December 30 was the Roman Decree read from the pulpit at Augsburg. At Freising, its publication was postponed to January 10. Eichstätt likewise neglected to act till January, and, as in the case of other bishoprics, minimized the document by means of guarded clauses. Even Meissen and Merseburg delayed its dissemination. Ratisbon prudently waited for developments. Passau offered covert resistance. The Upper Rhenish bishops, such as the bishop of Spire, for a long time took no notice of what had happened. The University of Ingolstadt scarcely manifested any interest. The University of Erfurt was openly hostile. The University of Vienna, in opposition to its theological faculty, declined to carry out the provisions of the Bull, and, in justification of its refusal, referred to the dilatory conduct of the archbishops of Salzburg and Mayence. In brief, Dr. Eck met with most unpleasant experiences in connection with his efforts to promulgate the papal Bull.

The learned Erasmus confirmed Frederick of Saxony, who inclined to Lutheranism, in his anti-ecclesiastical attitude. Owing to actual or feigned indisposition, the Elector tarried at Cologne at the time of the coronation of Charles V at Aix-la-Chapelle, October 28, 1520. Erasmus made personal representations to him there, contending that Luther should first be tried by learned and pious judges at a place free from suspicion. In judging of the controversy, Erasmus made a sarcastic remark to Frederick: "Luther has sinned in two respects—he has assailed the crown of the pope and the belly of the monks."<sup>60</sup> In conformity with Erasmus's suggestion, Frederick saw the two papal legates, Aleander and Caraccioli, who had been sent to the new king and to the emperor-elect.

These legates of Leo X were more successful with Charles V, who, though only twenty years of age, was a real monarch. He caused the Bull against Luther to be proclaimed in the Netherlands, his hereditary patrimony. At Louvain and Liège the writings of Luther were publicly burned. The same scene was enacted at Cologne, after

<sup>59</sup> Latin text in Weimar ed., VII, pp. 170 sqq.; Erl. ed., *Opp. Lat. Var.*, V, pp. 257 sqq.; German text in Weimar ed., VII, pp. 161 sqq.; Erl. ed., XXIV<sup>2</sup>, pp. 151 sqq.

<sup>60</sup> Kawerau, *Reformation und Gegenreformation*, 3rd ed., 1907, p. 30.

Elector Frederick had left that city in November. Aleander succeeded in having the same thing done at Mayence, though amid difficulties and opposition. The strict traditional demands of the Bull and the altered views of the age frequently collided. Even men devoted to the Church voiced their opposition to the forcible removal of heretics. Eck himself was decidedly in favor of the ancient imperial laws which demanded the execution of heretics. He dealt with this question in his widely circulated *Enchiridion adversus Lutteranos*, which abounded in quotations from the Fathers and theologians.<sup>61</sup>

Jerome Emser, who, like Eck, advocated the enforcement of the penal laws, also attacked Luther in print. The replies which he received from the latter were coarse and ironical, as may be seen from the pamphlets *An den Bock zu Leipzig* and *Auf des Bocks zu Leipzig Antwort* (1521).<sup>62</sup>

When the time for Easter confessions approached, in 1521, Luther, taking into account the critical situation of his readers relative to their confessors, published his *Instructions for Penitents on Prohibited Books*. It was a model of his apparently considerate, yet inciting approach to the practical questions involved in the conflict.<sup>63</sup>

He clearly perceived that for many the Easter confession of that year was to be decisive. Therefore he instructed his readers to entreat their confessor if he should question them, "with humble words," not to bother them about the books of Luther; they should simply say that the popes had often changed their opinions after promulgating a prohibition. If they were denied absolution because of their refusal to promise to leave the prohibited books alone, they should not be disturbed in conscience, "but be joyous and certain of absolution, and also receive the Sacrament [Communion] without any fear." The more courageous penitents, who had "a strong conscience," were told to rebuke their confessor to his face for his narrowmindedness. If communion was refused, they should first "humbly beg for it," and, if that were without avail, "abandon Sacrament, altar, priest and churches," for they all teach that "no commandment may be made or may exist in contravention of God's Word and your conscience."

Luther was inventive in the promotion of his cause. In his eagerness to avail himself of whatever appeared likely of serving his ends,

<sup>61</sup> Cap. 26: *De haereticis comburendis.*

<sup>62</sup> Weimar ed., VII, pp. 262 sqq., 271 sqq.; Erl. ed., XXVII, pp. 200 sqq., 205 sqq.

<sup>63</sup> Weimar ed., VII, pp. 290 sq.; Erl. ed., XXIV<sup>2</sup>, pp. 204 sqq.; Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 59 sq.

he, towards the close of 1520, made use of a notorious fable attributed to Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg, by providing a Wittenberg reprint of it with a preface of his own. This publication was intended to be an effective weapon against the celibacy of priests and religious. In this letter the saintly bishop is represented as narrating how some 3000 (according to others, 6000) heads of infants were discovered in a pond belonging to St. Gregory's nunnery at Rome. The manuscript with the letter had been sent to Luther from Holland. It is one of the clumsiest forgeries which issued from the ranks of the opponents of Gregory VII, who strictly enforced the ancient law of clerical celibacy. Emser called Luther to task for publishing this questionable letter, and he replied that he did not place much reliance upon it. Nevertheless, thanks to his patronage, the fable was allowed to continue on its harmful career and was zealously exploited.<sup>64</sup>

What was the attitude of the Augustinians towards Luther in these fateful days? The foundation on which the German Congregation of the Order rested, was deeply undermined by Luther's conduct and the undecided attitude of Staupitz. John Lang, Luther's confidant, who had succeeded Luther in the rural vicariate, advanced his cause by preparing the minds of the brethren for Luther's ideas. Wenceslaus Link effectively aided him. In the chapter which met at Eisleben, August 28, 1520, Staupitz resigned the vicariate when the storm broke over his head.<sup>65</sup> Fourteen friars abandoned the monastic life with Lang. Link succeeded Staupitz in the government of the congregation, now tottering to a fall. The monks who remained loyal were decried by their pro-Lutheran comrades as sanctimonious Pharisees, and their position became very difficult. At a meeting of the brethren at Wittenberg, on Epiphany, 1522, it was announced that begging would be officially prohibited. Moreover—and this was more important—it was resolved that, in view of the liberty granted by the Gospel, any monk might leave the monastery, but he must "pro-

<sup>64</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, pp. 89 sq. What Haussleiter, in the passage cited, establishes as a conjecture (that the Wittenberg edition of this fabulous letter and its preface were the work of Luther) was confirmed by Otto Clemen in the *Theol. Studien und Kritiken*, (XCIII 1920-1921), pp. 286 sqq. Luther appeals to the spurious letter of Bishop Ulrich in his Table Talks, Weimar ed., IV, no. 3983, p. 55; cf. also IV, No. 4358, p. 258, and No. 4731, p. 456. His commentary on Genesis, in the passage quoted by Haussleiter (p. 123), likewise refers to this letter. For the text of the forgery, see *Monumenta Germ. Hist., Leges*, I, pp. 254 sq.

<sup>65</sup> Kolde, *Die deutsche Augustinerkongregation*, p. 327.

ceed without scandal, lest the holy evangel be subject to insult.”<sup>66</sup> Among those who remained faithful at Erfurt were Nathin and Usingen, Luther’s former teacher, and a valiant defender of the Church, who retired to the Augustinian monastery at Würzburg in 1525. Luther in the meantime continued to live outwardly as a monk in the monastery at Wittenberg. He did not yet attack the validity and binding power of the monastic vows.

Staupitz, utterly disappointed, but still favorable to Luther and his doctrine, retired to the Benedictine monastery of St. Peter at Salzburg. He repeatedly exhorted his protégé not to go too far. In 1522, he even informed him in a letter that he ought to know that his (Luther’s) activities were being “praised by those who keep houses of ill-fame.”<sup>67</sup> Luther, on his part, bombarded him with letters, in which he importuned him to join his party whole-heartedly and openly. Owing to the restraint exercised by his environment, and undoubtedly also to the influence of Cardinal Matthew Lang, archbishop of Salzburg, who appointed him abbot of the above-mentioned Benedictine monastery, Staupitz finally made a fairly satisfactory, though ambiguous profession of faith and openly rejected Luther’s abuse of Christian liberty. He died in 1524, and was buried in the monastery graveyard. A large artistic slab, bearing his coat-of-arms, covers his remains in the chapel of St. Vitus, and an elegant epitaph, composed in the style of the age, proclaims his eulogy. The monastery preserves his portrait as a Benedictine abbot in a little known but fine oil-painting, the work of a contemporary artist.<sup>68</sup>

The image of this man, who for many years favored Luther, reminds the beholder of the words which Luther, in a spirit of uncanny satisfaction at the turmoil prevailing in Germany, wrote in one of his last letters to Staupitz: “The confusion rages splendidly (*tumultus egregie tumultuatur*).<sup>69</sup> It seems to me that it can be quelled only by the break of doomsday; so eagerly are both parties involved in it. Marvelous things are ready to happen in the history of the time . . . I have burned the books of the pope and likewise the Bull. In doing so, I was at first seized with fear, and prayed; but now I take greater

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 378 sq.; Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 337.

<sup>67</sup> Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 151 sq.

<sup>68</sup> Another, less reliable portrait of a later period is to be found in the series of abbots depicted on a wall of the monastery.

<sup>69</sup> January 14, 1521; *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 70.

pleasure in this act than in any other act of my life; they are undoubtedly a greater plague than I imagined!"

In the same letter he writes to his spiritual father thus: "At Augsburg [in the days of the trial] you said to me: 'Remember that you have begun this cause in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' . . . Until now it has really been but a trifling! More serious developments are at hand, and what you have once said is being verified: If God does not do it, it is impossible. Manifestly everything is in the hands of God. No one can deny it."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DIET OF WORMS (1521)

#### I. LUTHER ON TRIAL BEFORE THE EMPIRE

After Luther had been put under the ban, Pope Leo X addressed an earnest letter to Charles V, in which he demanded that those vested with the proper authority should execute its secular effects.

The diet of Worms had been convoked for January 6, 1521. Elector Frederick of Saxony, ever intent upon delaying the trial of Luther, proposed that Luther be permitted to come to Worms for a hearing before the diet. In a letter to Spalatin the rebellious monk expressed his willingness to make the journey.<sup>1</sup> But the opposition of the party loyal to the Church, especially that of Cardinals Aleander and Caraccioli, the papal nuncios attending the diet, the Elector, and subsequently also the Emperor, temporarily abandoned this plan. When Luther was apprised of this decision, he expressed his displeasure (*cum dolore legi*); for he sedulously strove to create the impression that he had not been accorded an adequate hearing. His fancy was charmed by the prospect of appearing on the world stage at Worms. How much could he not expect in furtherance of his cause from a courageous testimony given there in the presence of the empire! What had he to fear, protected as he was by an imperial safe-conduct and the support of his friends among the knights? Courage and presumption he possessed in a plentiful measure.<sup>2</sup>

Luther's opponents at the diet did not tarry in beginning opera-

<sup>1</sup> *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 24. Luther here solemnly advises Spalatin (and through him the Elector) of the dedication of his life to the cause he had espoused.

<sup>2</sup> On the preliminaries and Luther's appearance at the diet of Worms see Kalkoff, *Luther und die Entscheidungsjahre*, 1917, pp. 187 sqq., and the same author's *Der Wormser Reichstag*, 1922. Many of Kalkoff's assertions, however, are questionable. Cf. in addition H. v. Schubert, *Quellen und Forschungen über Luther auf dem Reichstag zu Worms*, 1899. A shorter but more reliable description in Janssen-Pastor, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, Vol. II, 20th ed., pp. 173 sqq. See also Grisar, *Lutherstudien*, No. I: *Luther zu Worms*, etc. pp. 111 sqq.