

CHAPTER XX

LUTHER'S FINAL STRUGGLES AND DEATH

I. THE MILITANT SPIRIT OF LUTHER IN WORD AND PICTURE

During the first half of the forties, the thought of death frequently engaged the mind of Luther. His apprehension was most strongly expressed on November 10, 1545, when he celebrated his sixty-first birthday in the circle of his friends, Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, Cruciger, Major, Paul Eber, and some others, who surrounded him at the festive board. He said then that he would not live to see Easter and spoke sorrowfully of the future apostasy of certain brethren, which would inflict a blow upon the Gospel greater than any of which the papists were capable, who, for the most part, were rude, ignorant Epicureans. He spoke of his impending death in a similar vein, though less definitely, in his declining years.

And yet these years furnish an exemplification of the incessant activity of this man, who was afflicted with melancholia. His literary productions, some of which have already been noted above, must be considered first.

With his impetuous pen he commenced a vigorous onslaught on the Jews and the Jewish religion. In the first years of his public career he had spoken of them in a different tone. At that time, as we have seen above, he harbored the seductive idea that they might be converted to the new Evangel. His treatise of 1523 was inspired by this visionary idea.¹ The acceptance of his Gospel on the part of the Jews was to be a divine seal of approval. But his expectations came to naught. As a result, indignation at their infidelity, their blasphemies against Christianity, and their oppression of non-Jews in Germany, took hold of him. With the sanction of Luther, John Frederick expelled the Jews from electoral Saxony in 1536, whilst King Ferdinand granted them an asylum in his territories.

Luther first proceeded against the infidelity and proselytizing zeal

¹ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 411 sq.

of the Jews in his "Epistle against the Sabbatarians," published in 1538. The Jews had succeeded in introducing the observance of the Sabbath and other rites in some localities, even among Christians. Then, commencing with 1542, he launched a violent attack, intended to annihilate the hostile Jewry. In the year mentioned he published his tract "On the Jews and their Lies."² Immediately afterwards he completed his tract, "On Shem Hamphoras and the Generation of Christ"—a work which exhibits greater forcefulness, but overflows with attacks and is saturated with vulgarities.³ Shem Hamphoras (or "peculiar name"), according to Luther, was a cabbalistic formula of the Jews, supposed to be endowed with great power, by means of which Jesus was alleged to have wrought His miracles. In 1543 followed another literary attack upon the Jews, which bore the title: "On the Last Words of David."⁴ An ardent zeal for outraged Christianity is reflected in these productions, which bear evidence of an agitated frame of mind. Luther's zeal for truth and justice, however, does not improve matters because that work abounds in extravagant appeals to inflict violence upon a race struck with religious blindness and weighed down by injustice.

Once more he raised his voice against that persecuted race in his last sermon at Eisleben, on February 14, 1546:⁵ "You rulers," he said, "ought not to tolerate, but to expel them." By indirection it was a summons to rise against the Jews, who were favored in the neighboring country of Mansfeld, but had become notorious by their fraudulent and usurious practices.

Usury was an evil which Luther also attacked in other vigorous pamphlets. Having written two sermons against it as early as 1519 and 1520, and having condemned it anew in his tract, "On Commerce and Usury," written in 1524,⁶ he once more returned to this favorite topic in 1540, when he wrote his "Appeal to Pastors to Preach against Usury."⁷ Although he manifested an exaggerated zeal against the abuses connected with money loans, he revealed no

² Weimar ed., Vol. LIII, pp. 412 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXXII, pp. 99 sqq.; cfr. Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 402 sqq.

³ Weimar ed., Vol. LIII, pp. 573 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXXII, pp. 275 sqq.; cfr. Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 404-407.

⁴ Erl. ed., Vol. XXXVII, pp. 1 sqq.

⁵ Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 374.

⁶ Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 86 sqq.

⁷ Weimar ed., Vol. LI, pp. 331 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXIII, pp. 282 sqq.; Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, Vol. II, p. 432; Grisar, *l. c.*

insight into the commercial and trade relations whose development had then practically begun, and which appeared to justify a fair rate of interest on loaned capital. He condemns interest-taking outright,⁸ and makes but one exception, by granting that the aged and widows and orphans might, if necessary, exact interest on loans in order to secure a livelihood.

An "Exhortation to Prayer against the Turks," which he wrote in 1541, is superior in tone and contents to Luther's previous pamphlets against the Turks.⁹ The elector had urged the people to pray against the Saracen menace, which constantly grew more threatening. It is the will of God, Luther declares, that Christians should beseech the Lord for aid in a penitential spirit and sincere faith. The Turk and the pope are on the decline and Judgment Day will soon console the faithful. We have here a repetition of the thoughts on which he delighted to dwell in view of his approaching death. His "Computation of the Years of the Word" (*Supputatio Annorum Mundi*), which is in line with this tendency of his mind, appeared in the same year and was re-edited with alterations in 1545.¹⁰ His dreams of Antichrist and the end of the world form the subject-matter of his work on "The Twelfth Chapter of Daniel," which was published at the same time.¹¹

This series was followed by a preface to Ezechiel, as well as two works, not devoid of merit, which were intended to combat the Koran, and his booklet, "Consolation for Wives who have not Fared well in Bearing Children," a practical work designed to meet the spiritual wants of the nation. In 1543 began the publication of his lectures on Genesis, based upon notes made by his hearers under the editorship of Vitus Dietrich. Luther himself at this time, was engaged in the interpretation of the Messianic prophecies of Isaia, a work which was published only after his death.

His "Brief Profession of Faith in the Blessed Sacrament" (1544)¹² was the fruit of the deeply felt need of once more settling accounts with those who opposed his teaching of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. "I, who am about to die," he says, "wish to take with me before the judgment seat of my Lord this testimony, that, in com-

⁸ Thus Köstlin, *l. c.*

⁹ Weimar ed., Vol. LI, pp. 585 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXXII, pp. 74 sqq.; Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, Vol. II, p. 563. Cfr. Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 167, 417 sqq.

¹⁰ Weimar ed., Vol. LIII, pp. 151 sqq.

¹¹ Erlangen ed., Vol. XLI, pp. 294 sqq.

¹² *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 396 sqq.

pliance with God's command in Tit. III, 10, I have earnestly condemned and avoided the fanatics and adversaries of the Sacrament, Karlstadt, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Stenkefeld (*i. e.*, Schwenckfeld), and their disciples at Zurich, or wherever they may be." He answers their objections with the question, whether, by the same token, they are not compelled to deny belief in the humanity and divinity of Christ. "We must," he says, "either believe everything, wholly and entirely, or nothing." For God is omnipotent. The adversaries, with their "infernal hearts and lying mouths" are not even deserving of prayer.

This angry tract was occasioned by the new movement of the Swiss reformers against belief in the Real Presence and by the above-mentioned so-called "Reformation of Cologne," composed by Melanchthon and Bucer, which, to the chagrin of Luther, spoke in Bucer's sense of a purely spiritual communion with the body and blood of Christ in the Last Supper.¹³ Melanchthon, who had collaborated in the "Reformation of Cologne," was worried about himself and his fate. It was said at Wittenberg that Luther was about to propose a formula to which all would be compelled to subscribe. When this formula ("Brief Creed") appeared, there was rejoicing because it contained no reference to Melanchthon and Bucer. Luther had suppressed his chagrin and did not care to cast suspicion upon these men in public. All the more ruthlessly, however, did this tract sever his relations with the Swiss innovators, which, notwithstanding the theological controversies, had gradually become more tolerable.

The Swiss reformers soon issued energetic counter-declarations. Bullinger, above all, entered the lists against Luther with his "True Creed" of the Zurich theologians,¹⁴ in which he states that the abusive language of the Wittenbergers would not be reciprocated by him. He severely censured the violent and indecent effusions of an aged and otherwise highly respected man, and especially the autocratic manner of his decisions. The theological reasons which Bullinger advances for the Eucharistic beliefs of Zwingli's disciples are not very impressive.

Whilst Melanchthon was still engaged in the composition of his cautious "Wittenberg Reformation," which was intended to be a programme in opposition to the Council of Trent, which was then commencing, Luther summoned all his available strength to deliver

¹³ Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, Vol. II, p. 581.

¹⁴ Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, pp. 325 sq.; Vol. V, p. 409.

a new blow against the papacy, for his hatred was not yet quenched. This fresh outburst was contained in a work, the first part of which bore the title, "Against the Papacy at Rome founded by the Devil" (1545).¹⁵ He attacks the papacy along the entire line and frequently in a furious fashion, because it refused to succumb to his assaults, nay, even dared to gain new vigor at the Council. Luther held that the papacy originated in hell and was sustained by infernal powers. This is drastically illustrated by a picture on the title page of this pamphlet,¹⁶ which represents the pope seated on his throne in the widely distended and terrible jaws of hell, and borne upward by ropes drawn by devils. Whilst adoring the prince of hell, who flees before him, he is crowned with a tiara which tapers into a point composed of human excrements.

We may be permitted to omit quotations from this horrible pamphlet, which contains repetitions of former ideas, but clothed in forms which seem to force an irrevocable decision concerning the mental state of its author, which, as is known, frequently obtruded itself upon the reader of his former writings.¹⁷

Luther arrived at the unfortunate resolution of publishing this pamphlet with illustrations.

He had already increased the number of his previously published polemical illustrations by some which were calculated to arouse the brutal passions of the masses.¹⁸ One pamphlet depicted the pope as Satan.¹⁹ A frightful, savage and nude giant, with an immense tail, wears the triple crown and is adorned with the ears of an ass. In his right hand he holds the trunk of a tree resembling a club; in his left, which is extended in a threatening manner, he holds a large, broken key. Amid fire and smoke, this "pope-ass" expectorates worms and filth, like the dragon in the Apocalypse (c. XVI). The wings of a bat, serrated after the manner of flames, can be seen on his back. Beneath him, the fires of hell burst forth. A devil wearing a cardinal's hat and seated at the right on a papal Bull, devours a bishop, and allows his excrements to drop upon the papal seal.

¹⁵ Erl. ed., Vol. XXVI, ii, pp. 131 sqq.

¹⁶ Grisar and Heege, *Luthers Kampfbilder*, n. 4 (*Lutherstudien*, V), p. 20.

¹⁷ Passages from this pamphlet quoted in Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 381 sqq., 421 sqq.; Vol. III, p. 151.

¹⁸ Cf. Grisar und Heege, *Luthers Kampfbilder*, n. 2 and 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 4, plate 2, with text, pp. 67 sqq.

One series of controversial illustrations furnished by Luther is entitled, "Illustrations of the Papacy." It was published in 1545 and was intended to illustrate, as it were, his "Papacy founded by Satan." It contains the following caricatures:²⁰ "The Pope-Ass of Rome, a monster found in the Tiber in 1496"; the ascent of the pope from hell; the mockery of the ban by two rogues with exposed backs and emitting blasts of wind against the pope. Again, there are illustrations deriding the papal government by the most crude defilement of the papal arms, depicting a wretch discharging his faeces into them whilst two others are getting ready to follow his example. Another illustration depicts the great keys on the papal arms as master-keys in the hands of thieves. The fifth illustration shows the manner in which the papacy rewards the emperors—the fictitious decapitation of Conradine by the hand of a pope. Sixth, there is "the reward of the most Satanic pope and his cardinals," represented by the death of the pope on the gallows in the company of two cardinals and a priest. The seventh and eighth cartoons, which appear on one page, represent the pope riding a sow and offering to the world steaming human excrements with his blessing, which was designed to be an insult to the proposed Council; the other illustration (intended to be a mockery of the pope's biblical exegesis) depicts him in the capacity of an ass performing on the bag-pipe. The last and ninth cartoon is designed to suggest that the pope was born of a nude she-devil, a scene vulgar beyond all description.

A wood-cut, which depicts Pope Alexander III placing his foot on the neck of Emperor Barbarossa, as well as the pope-ass above described, do not belong to this series. The two repulsive illustrations of the origin of Antichrist, *i. e.*, the papacy, and the origin of the monastic life, were free supplements, for which Luther seems to be partially responsible. The entire collection has become extremely rare, owing probably to the outraged sensibilities of those who were offended by them. In recent times, these cartoons have been resubmitted to the public in the interests of history, but not by partisans of Luther.²¹

Luther's active participation in the "Illustrations of the Papacy" has been placed beyond question by recent research. He even as-

²⁰ *Kampfbilder*, n. 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, plate 3 and text, pp. 92 sqq.

sisted the "artist" with his crayon, besides contributing the ideas and the crude verses that accompanied the cartoons.²² His name is attached to the illustrations of the series, as well as to the cartoon of the pope-devil. The drawings themselves were without exception the product of his confidant, Lucas Cranach, an artist who had previously achieved fame by his fine religious paintings.

Hence, it is historically untenable if Protestant authors hold Cranach solely responsible for the disgraceful cartoons of the papacy and ascribe only the text to Luther. These illustrations are his spiritual property in the fullest sense of the word, and Luther himself described them as his last will and testament to the German nation.²³

He expressed the wish that these cartoons might enter every home and workshop, and thus bear effective witness against the papacy.

Luther did not even shrink from designing a cartoon which represented the death of the pope on the gallows, clearly intended to provoke deeds of violence.²⁴ This cartoon deserves special mention because of its sanguinary and inciting character. The pope is distinguishable as the then reigning pontiff, Paul III. His tongue has been pulled out of his throat, and an executioner is engaged in nailing it to the gallows, as had already been done to three others who had been hanged thereon, namely, Cardinal Albrecht of Mayence, Cardinal Otto Truchsess of Augsburg (?), and the priest Cochlaeus (?). Four devils convey the souls of the executed felons to hell. Despite his exhortations to the contrary, there are numerous passages in the writings of Luther which incite, or are apt to incite, to sanguinary deeds of violence against the clergy and the monks.²⁵ Of course, it cannot be inferred from such expressions of passionate rage that Luther was actually prepared to indorse the assassination of ecclesiastical dignitaries, or personally to take a hand in them. It is quite patent, however, that bloody results were apt to follow the dissemination of cartoons such as those described, especially the last brutal gallows scene, in conjunction with Luther's sanguinary cries for violence.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 73 sqq., 86, p. 89, p. 91 and the testimony of Christoph Walther, Aurifaber, and Amsdorf. Luther had some proficiency in drawing; cf. *Kampfbilder*, n. 3, pp. 59 sqq.

²³ *Kampfbilder*, n. 4, p. 86.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, plate 1 in actual size, and text, p. 26.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 137-139, where twelve passages are quoted. Cf. the cartoon published by Luther in 1538, which picture Paul III as Judas. (*Kampfbilder*, n. 4, p. 4.)

2. IN THE MIDST OF RUINS

Many contemporary writings contain doleful lamentations, not only on the part of Protestants, but also on that of Catholics, concerning the decay of the internal life of the Church brought about by the Protestant Reformation. Thus when, in 1549, John Cochlaeus printed the preface to his great work, "On the Work and Writings of Luther," he deplored the wounds of the Church in melancholy terms.²⁶ He was grieved, above all, by the unhappy lot of the souls that had been severed from the Church, the fountain of salvation. "The bond of charity and concord which unites Christian people," he says, "has been loosened, discipline undermined, reverence for God destroyed, wholesome fear extinguished, and obedience cast aside. In lieu of these prevail sinfulness and a freedom that is alien to God." This courageous defender of the Church died at Breslau in the year 1552.

John Wild, who died two years later, was a distinguished cathedral preacher of Mayence and a Franciscan Observantine. He paints an impressive picture of the moral decadence which had set in and proved so detrimental to Catholic religious life.²⁷ "Alas," he exclaims, "all fear of God is driven out of the hearts of men by dint of sermons lacking all sense of modesty and urging faith alone. . . . The other, namely, good works, has been trodden in the mire. The result is that we are now for the most part Christians merely in name, but so far as works are concerned, more depraved and wicked than even Jews or Turks. The cause of the very grievous sufferings of the Church," he says, is "that her children have been and are so lamentably led astray that they refuse any longer to acknowledge their own mother."

With depressed feelings Wild views his German fatherland torn by factions and become a byword to its neighbors. "Everybody wants a bit of us." People say: "Ha, these are the haughty Germans who . . . have a finger in every war; now they are going to set to on each other."

Duke William of Bavaria, another opponent of the Reformation, presented the diet of Ratisbon (1541) with a memorial in which he bitterly complained of the "great injury and corruption" into

²⁶ *Commentaria de Actis, etc.*, part I, Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, pp. 365 sq.

²⁷ Cf. N. Paulus, *Johann Wild (Dritte Vereinsschrift der Görresgesellschaft, 1893)*, p. 15; Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, pp. 366 sq.

which his fellow-Catholics were being led by the Protestantizers. "Contrary to the commandment of God, in defiance of law and Christian usages . . . churches and monasteries are seized by force . . . religious foundations and property are torn from them mercilessly." And yet "the Catholics have no dearer wish than order and justice."²⁸ Once more the religious and judicial grievances of the Catholics were prominently brought forward at the diet of Worms (1545). It was maintained that the opponents of the faith were suppressing everything; yet they complained about being suppressed themselves. "What the Protestants call proclaiming the Word of God, is for the most part, as they themselves complain, mere slander and abuse of the pope." "Nothing constant any more," says the Cologne Doctor Carl von der Plassen, "discipline, loyalty, and respectability have vanished." He is pained to observe the evil reaction of the religious innovation on the lives of Catholics. "What misery results from want of clergy and schools even in the lands which have remained Catholic!"

Besides the alarming increase in the number of violations of sacerdotal celibacy, already mentioned above, the decrease in the reception of the sacraments and attendance at divine worship in the Catholic parts of Germany was especially lamentable. Thus Peter Canisius complains in his letters about Ingolstadt that communions in that Catholic city had practically ceased. He writes in 1550 that, although two bells are rung to summon the people to Mass, which is said in a church located in the center of the city, "still, we cannot induce two persons to attend Mass, even if we would pay them for coming." The law of fasting had become practically obsolete in the academy known as the Georgianum.²⁹ In Austria the state of Catholicism was scarcely less disheartening. Esteem for the clergy had profoundly declined. Almost in no wise did the shepherds measure up to the tasks of their vocation. Monastic discipline had deserted most of the cloisters. Ignorance and barbarity prevailed among the masses. The University of Vienna had deteriorated very appreciably. In the course of twenty years this institution, which had formerly yielded such abundant fruits for the Church, scarcely produced one student a year for the priesthood.³⁰

Luther always tried hard to propagate his doctrines in Austria.

²⁸ For these and the following two passages see Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 367 sq.

²⁹ Braunsberger, *Canisius*, 2nd and 3rd ed., 1921, pp. 44-47.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 51 sq.

Among others, he endeavored to attract the Moravian Brethren to his cause. Notwithstanding important variations of doctrine, he treated the senior of the Brethren, who came to Wittenberg in 1540 and again in 1542, with great distinction. He exhorted the Brethren in writing to persevere with him to the end in unity of doctrine and spirit, since he expected soon to depart this life.³¹ Wittenberg did not adopt any part of the ecclesiastical discipline which the Moravian Brethren maintained. Nor was there ever any spiritual connection between them. Later on, in 1772, the congregation of Moravian Brethren (Herrnhuter) in Saxony resulted from a rapprochement between Lutheranism and the Brethren.

In Transylvania, also, efforts were made, towards the end of Luther's life, to effect a closer union with Wittenberg and an increased separation from Rome. In 1542, the preacher William Farel despatched a letter from Metz requesting a union of the followers of the new religion with the Schmalkaldic League. About this time overtures were begun in Vienna for the sake of obtaining Luther's advice and direction. They were, however, devoid of notable results. Italy was preserved from religious subversion by the watchfulness of the Inquisition. For the rest, the weakness of the new religion was too little known abroad.

The extent to which authority, spiritual as well as temporal, was shaken in consequence of Luther's rebellion against the ancient faith, became clearly manifest in Germany. Preachers who were highly esteemed by Luther were treated with contempt and derision by their own followers. Wenceslaus Link, once the honored successor of Staupitz as vicar of the Augustinians, was derisively hailed in Nuremberg as "Pfaff" by the magistrates whilst carrying on his Protestant activities in that town. Luther consoled him by writing: "The civil authorities have ever been, and always will be, enemies of the Church." "Our respected domestic opponents," he continues, "are dangerous to us, according to the prophecy: 'After the revelation of Antichrist, there will come men who say, there is no God!'"³² "Each will desire to be his own rabbi," he says on another occasion, "whence the greatest devastation will ensue."³³

Under Link as vicar-general, the Augustinian congregation began

³¹ Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, Vol. II, p. 579.

³² Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, p. 325.

³³ Tischreden, Weimar ed., Vol. III, n. 3900.

to decline. The three succeeding vicars witnessed its complete ruin. The Saxon province of the Order also fell a victim to the religious innovation. Its own members promoted subversion and confusion.³⁴ Melanchthon, and still more Bucer, continued to cherish the fervent hope that, during the prevalence of this state of confusion, "our princes and estates will bring about a council or some kind of harmony in doctrine and worship, lest everybody proceed on his own responsibility" (Melanchthon). That a council would only be productive of greater disunion, Luther perceived more clearly than the others. The reason was because there was no sanction, and this was the permanent cause of the ruination.

"In God's kingdom, in which He rules through the Gospel," Luther taught as a fundamental truth of his theology, "there is no going to law, nor have we anything to do with law, but everything is summed up in forgiveness, remission and bestowing, and there is no anger or punishment, nothing but benevolence and service of our neighbor."³⁵ As a consequence, doctrines and ethical precepts were invalidated, as there was no authority to enforce them. Luther's system is altogether devoid of an authoritative foundation, such as the Catholic Church possesses in her constitution; everything is "opinion and advice," as he himself avers.³⁶ He is neither able nor does he desire to lay down precepts. Since, however, he cannot afford to do without some force that binds men, he appeals to civil authority, to the State, which must be Lutheran, and to which he even ascribes the right of deciding doctrinal controversies, provided only that the decision is "in conformity with Scripture." In this manner—as the Protestant theologian, Christopher Ernest Luthardt, is compelled to acknowledge in his *Ethik Luthers*—Luther arrived at propositions which are "at variance with his fundamental views," and at suppositions concerning the secular authority "which he decisively denies where he lays down principles."³⁷

Nor did Luther have an authoritative argument by which he might have convinced those of his opponents who denounced the Blessed Trinity, as happened first in Protestant Nuremberg, if the civil government did not proceed against them. He and Melanchthon refused

³⁴ Cfr. Kolde, *Die deutsche Augustinerkongregation*, Gotha, 1879, last chapter.

³⁵ Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 565.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 566.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 567.

to reply to Campanus, who denied the Trinity, lest they advertise his opinions.

Antinomianism, for which Luther had persecuted Agricola, continued its course beneath the ruins, being promoted by the eloquent and active Jacob Schenck, who was for a time court-preacher at Weimar. In a sermon which he delivered at Eisenach in 1540, Luther discovered a confirmation of his suspicion that Schenk's "opposition to the law" furnished the common people with an occasion of moral laxity. Schenk was called to the electoral court of Joachim of Brandenburg, as assistant to the antinomian Agricola, and it is claimed that he starved himself to death in a spell of melancholia.³⁸ When Agricola again visited Wittenberg, in company with his wife and daughter, in 1545, the old differences manifested themselves anew; despite the fact that he brought with him a letter of recommendation from his elector. Luther refused to see the "arrogant and impious fellow," as he had branded him on a former occasion, though he received his wife and daughter. After Luther's death, Agricola, bowing to the situation that existed at the Brandenburg court, posed as a defender of genuine Lutheranism against the "Philippists," i.e., the adherents of Melanchthon. The solemn religious services which he conducted in honor of the Reformation in the court-chapel at Berlin, in 1563, were a sort of triumphal assertion of what pretended to be orthodox Lutheranism. "Thus the man whom Luther had proscribed, contributed to the triumph of rigorous Lutheranism."³⁹ Agricola died during an epidemic in 1566.

Another characteristic feature of the spreading theological ruin was Agricola's impassioned opposition to Melanchthon's revision of the Augsburg Confession, the so-called *Confessio Variata* of 1540. Melanchthon, as is well known, underwent a process of theological development which took him farther and farther away from Luther. He interpreted essential portions of the Augsburg Confession, which he himself had composed in 1530, so that Agricola spoke of the "Variata" as a "falsified" Confession and availed himself of Melanchthon's arbitrary changes as an argument in his indictment of "Philipism." Melanchthon, on his part, stated at the religious conference of Augsburg that the only changes he had made were certain modifications

³⁸ Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, Vol. II, p. 467.

³⁹ Kawerau in the *Realencyklopädie für Theologie*, etc., Vol. I, 3rd ed., p. 253.

of language with a view to greater clearness of doctrine.⁴⁰ The doctrines of justification, good works, and penance, however, had actually been altered in accordance with the ideas which Melanchthon had proposed in 1535 in his *Loci Theologici*, and which approximated the Catholic teaching. The propositions on the Last Supper reveal concessions to the Swiss reformers, who denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. "That there was question of actual changes, ought never to have been denied," writes Theodore Kolde, a Protestant authority on Luther.⁴¹ Luther himself never publicly rejected the "Confessio Variata." He did not wish to provoke an open breach with his learned and indispensable ally. But after his death Melanchthon experienced the ill-will of the theologians of the New Gospel. How bitterly he felt it may be gathered from the fact that, shortly before his demise (April 19, 1560), he wrote with his own hand that among the reasons why he did not fear death so much was this: "You will be delivered from all trouble and the fury of the theologians."⁴²

A compliant attitude towards dogma, similar to that of Luther towards Melanchthon's "Confessio Variata," is discovered in the position taken by both these men toward the Articles of Agreement elaborated by the English Protestants in 1536, proposing a union between Anglicanism and Lutheranism. At that time it was a question of winning over an important country.⁴³ After the attempt had failed, the German reformers were rewarded by hostility on the part of the new Anglican Church toward Lutheranism. Luther himself declared that he was glad to be rid of the "blasphemer" (Henry VIII).⁴⁴ He was very much depressed, however, when the King (in 1540) executed Luther's friend Barnes, who had played the rôle of mediator for years between Wittenberg and Henry VIII. Barnes was put to death as a heretic because he promulgated Luther's doctrine of justification.

A strong rival of Luther's ecclesiastical polity appeared during the declining years of his life in Calvinism, which deviated widely from the Wittenberg school. John Calvin, who had established his politico-religious rule at Geneva, in 1541, began by opposing Luther's assertion of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Genevan

⁴⁰ Grisar, *Luther*, I. c.

⁴¹ *Symbolische Bücher*, ed. by H. T. Müller, 10th ed., Introduction, p. XXV.

⁴² Cfr. Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 265.

⁴³ G. Mentz; cfr. Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 260.

⁴⁴ Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, Vol. II, p. 400.

innovator flatly denied this doctrine and described the intentionally vague formulas of Melanchthon and Bucer as "mere vaporings," intended to deceive their opponents. Also with regard to predestination, Calvin discarded the hypocrisies of the Lutheran position by asserting that it is not free will which governs men's efforts to save their souls, but the irresistible providence of God in a deterministic sense. Calvin was a most pronounced and consistent champion of unconditional predestination. From the practical standpoint, it was important that he rejected Luther's fundamental principle of the separation of the spiritual and temporal kingdoms and in its place set up a theocracy at Geneva, where his theology permeated every fibre of public life and he himself governed with a reckless absolutism. Subsequently, this type of political religion was adopted to a greater or less degree by the Calvinistic churches in other countries. Notwithstanding the differences between their respective doctrines, however, Luther and Calvin mutually eulogized each other. Calvin was treated with consideration by Luther and, in his turn, acknowledged the influence which Luther had exercised upon him. Had Luther lived longer, the two reformers would no doubt have become embroiled in violent altercations.⁴⁵

In view of Zwinglianism and Calvinism, Protestants often speak of a complete and free evolution of Protestantism. It would be more proper to speak of a multiplication of ruins, which the spirit of innovation wrought within the domain of dogma.

Continuing the discussion of German Lutheranism—when we turn from the sphere of dogma to that of practical affairs, we discover that the greatest damage during Luther's declining years was done to ecclesiastical property. Luther was fully aware of the fact that the confiscation of the temporal possessions of the Church would constitute a powerful stimulus for the civil governments to open their territories to the new ecclesiastical régime. With sentiments of self-satisfaction he refers his elector to the "considerable wealth, which increases daily."⁴⁶ Whatever the territorial ruler did not appropriate, was confiscated by the magistrates of the different municipalities. These seized pre-eminently the minor benefices which, as a rule, depended either upon them or upon prominent families. The emolu-

⁴⁵ On the relations between Calvin and Luther see Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 399 sqq.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 35.

ments, so Luther and the rulers frequently asserted, were intended for the maintenance of schools, preachers, and parishes. Still, there are numerous complaints made by Luther and his followers that such was not the case, or that the "harpies" among the nobility interfered, in order to enrich themselves. Who, in surveying that age, can calculate the immense sums derived from the confiscation of bishoprics, clerical benefices, and monasteries, which were forever alienated from the spiritual or educational purposes for which they had been given, including the foundations of Christian charity which dispensed help with a lavish hand? Even if the former use of these properties was not always in conformity with the pious intentions of their founders; even if the revenues from these ancient endowments were allowed to accumulate excessively, when contrasted with the possessions of the bourgeoisie, a fact which gave rise to many complaints and altercations—yet the spoliation, perpetrated by ineffable acts of violence, was assuredly not the proper solution of the existing problem. It merely caused ruin and destruction.⁴⁷

As these ruins accumulated, the theologians of Wittenberg gave up the idea of regulative intervention. When, in 1544, the magistrate of a certain city requested Luther to advise him, according to Sacred Scripture, on the question of the confiscation of ecclesiastical property, he replied: "This matter does not concern us theologians. Such things must be decided by the lawyers." It was a formal evasion of questions which the theologians themselves had raised.⁴⁸ They saw with their own eyes and acknowledged the curse which always follows the spoliation of the Church. Thus Paul Eber, Luther's Wittenberg friend, speaks of the penury which was visited upon the devotees of the Lutheran Church in consequence of the spoliation, and predicts that the future will reveal even more clearly how the confiscated Church property will react upon its beneficiaries, who "so greatly warmed and fattened themselves by means of these spiritual possessions."⁴⁹

A particularly sad chapter in the history of the dissipation of the property of the Church is furnished by the destruction of numerous works of ecclesiastical art that adorned the churches. In Lutheran Germany this destruction was not as great as in the Zwinglian parts

⁴⁷ On the fate of the Church property, cfr. Grisar, *Luther, passim* (see index).

⁴⁸ Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 206 sq.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 59 sqq.

of Switzerland and of southern and western Germany, where a veritable mania developed against images, altars, and other objects of sacred art. Thus the city of Nuremberg, for instance, owed the preservation of many precious art treasures to the indulgent attitude of the populace and its civic spirit. Still, Lutheran communities also became the scene of much destruction. There is extant a catalogue of Blasius Kneusel, which lists the objects of ecclesiastical art destroyed at Meissen. He enumerates fifty-one objects of great value which had been robbed by spoliators—amongst them a golden cross “of the weight of 1,300 gulden, heavy with precious stones,” a diamond cross worth 16,000 gulden, several golden crosses adorned with precious stones and pearls, a gold plate appraised at a thousand gulden, a large bust of St. Benno, made of precious metals, weighing more than 36 pounds, which had been purchased with the charitable gifts of the members of the parish of Meissen. From time to time, even now, treasures of religious art are discovered in hiding places which were purloined at that time. In its avarice, this barbaric age did not hesitate to consign to the melting-pot the most precious monstrances, chalices, and patens, excusing itself on the strength of the commonplace Lutheran charge of “idolatry.” Luther’s hostility to pictorial representations became fatal to art, even though he moderated his expressions on this subject as time went on. His unchanging attitude was that the religious images would gradually disappear if his doctrine prevailed. The creation of a religious image or statue was no longer counted as a good work.⁵⁰ The decline of artistic development in Germany, which had justified the highest expectations at the close of the Middle Ages, was brought on by Luther’s work.

Moreover, a perceptible retrogression in the care of the poor resulted from the destruction of ecclesiastical revenues. The practice of Christian charity sustained a severe blow. The assertion that good works were of no value was bound to weaken the spirit of charity, so splendidly manifested towards the close of the Middle Ages by the foundation of hospitals and other charitable institutions under ecclesiastical auspices. Luther intended to substitute for them the so-called community poor-boxes and a more intensive care of the poor on the part of the civil authorities. But these boxes were success-

⁵⁰ On Meissen, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 203, 169; on destructive activities in Erfurt, *ibid.*, pp. 213 sqq.; on Luther’s attitude toward the veneration of images in general, cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 207 sqq.

fully operated only in a few places. Luther's failure at Leisnig and elsewhere produced a deterrent effect. Luther, moreover, wished to see begging completely prohibited. His movement was directed against the mendicant Orders of the Catholic Church, but it produced no far-reaching social results.⁵¹

Complaints that the moral sense, which in the last analysis must sustain all charitable endeavors, was becoming extinguished, were multiplied by Luther and his partisans. Under the papacy, he says, people had been eager to make sacrifices for the poor, but now they had grown cold.⁵² In his opinion the society of true Christians, planned by him, was bound to cultivate the spirit of sacrifice in the era of the new Gospel; but, he says, "would that we had nations and individuals who sincerely desired to be Christians!" In one of his sermons he exclaims: "Woe unto you peasants, burghers, and members of the nobility, who appropriate all things unto yourselves, who scrape and hoard, and yet desire to be good evangelicals!" It was a proof that he was "unsophisticated," as a modern sociologist mildly puts it, that Luther ascribed to the "faith" which he preached the sole power of overcoming the obstacles to charity by means of the community poor-box.⁵³

Adolph Harnack concedes that, "where Lutheranism was in the ascendant, social care of the poor was soon reduced to a worse plight than ever before."⁵⁴ The lack of resourcefulness of the Protestant system of poor-relief continued for a long time.

Protestant authors, by way of contrast, have referred to the excellent systems of poor-relief that flourished in the cities of South Germany at the time of the religious schism. But these institutions were a heritage of the fifteenth century, that is, of the Catholic Middle Ages. They owed as little to Lutheranism as the excellent institutions and arrangements for the poor which existed in the Catholic Netherlands, such as, for instance, at Ypres, in 1525. It was Catholic idealism, humanism, and the rising civic spirit of the municipalities as they attained to independence, which created those praiseworthy institutions. Protestantism, on the other hand, even after Bugenhagen had improved the parish treasuries in virtue of his superior genius for organization, as a rule attained only to inadequate governmental regulations of the system of poor-relief with a tinge of religious influence. These

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 50 sqq.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 54 sq.

⁵³ Feuchtwanger, quoted *ibid.*, pp. 56 sq.

⁵⁴ *Reden und Aufsätze*, Vol. II (1904), p. 52.

"poor-chests" were occasionally described by envious parties as "clerical and usury funds," which does not, however, prove that in certain localities, such as Hesse and Strasburg, they did not really benefit the poor, especially when administered by men of truly Christian charity.

William Liese, the most recent Catholic writer on the history of charity, correctly observes that "in practice the olden Catholic ideals and motives continued to operate," but "it can scarcely be affirmed" that there was a Protestant impetus in the interest of poor-relief, or a growth of charity in early Protestantism, whilst, on the other hand, "new principles are wont to make their influence felt most clearly in the beginning," and in the history of Christianity it was "precisely the primitive age" that "produced the noblest fruits of charity."⁵⁵

Relative to the schools, also, the aging Luther failed to see about him that revival for which he had appealed in various writings; on the contrary, here, too, he observed increasing dissolution and decline. "Now that it is a question of founding true schools," he laments, "every purse is closed with iron chains, and no one is able to give." This deplorable state of affairs made him beg of God a happy death, so that he might not live to witness Germany's punishment.⁵⁶ Even more frequent and persistent are the complaints of Melanchthon, who was a professional educator, on the failure of his endeavors in this sphere. In consequence of the decadence of Christian schools, he once wrote, we shall yet become pagans.⁵⁷ In Catholic districts a similar deplorable retrogression of the school system ensued in consequence of the religious controversies. At first, indeed, Protestantism was able to retrieve itself in virtue of the support given it by those princes who were intent upon procuring recruits for their bureaucratic system and favored the general education of the people.⁵⁸ That Luther is the founder of the "*Volksschule*" is as unfounded a claim as that he is to be regarded as the author of poor-relief and a promoter of charity on a grand scale. These claims are but the extreme expressions

⁵⁵ *Geschichte der Caritas*, Vol. I (1922), pp. 255 sq. Liese reports the findings of Feuchtwanger, Püschel, Otto Winckelmann (1922), and others, and concludes: "If we review the recent vivid discussion of the subject, we find substantial agreement on the following points: (1) The Reformation has not promoted, but rather injured charity; (2) it has given a powerful impetus to governmental poor-relief, as is revealed by the multitude of municipal ordinances passed from 1520 to 1530."

⁵⁶ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. VI, p. 53. On the decline of schools, *ibid.*, pp. 22 sqq., and Janssen-Pastor, Vol. VII, 14th ed. (1904), pp. 5 sqq., 81 sqq.

⁵⁷ Grisar, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 435.

of a Luther cult which has no basis in history. His claims as a champion of culture are equally baseless. Beginning with the Peasants' War he spoke and wrote rabidly against the peasants and the mob and continued to do this to the end of his life. He had adopted the maxim: "It does not do to pipe too much to the mob, or it will too readily lose its head."⁵⁹ In his speeches he frequently works himself into a veritable rage against the mob, calling it "Master Omnes," the "many-headed monster," etc. As a Protestant author, Feuchtwanger, says, Luther is not far removed from the politico-social ideas of Machiavelli, who counsels rulers to keep a tight rein on the masses.⁶⁰ Gradually he began to claim absolute authority. "If compulsion and the law of the strong arm still ruled," he says, "as in the past, so that if a man dared to grumble, he got a box on the ear—things would fare better; otherwise it is all of no use."⁶¹ "Christ does not wish to abolish serfdom," he says in another passage on the oppressed condition of the peasants, whose lot was constantly growing worse. "What cares He how the lords or princes rule [in temporal matters]?" In his sermons on the first book of Moses, he actually represents serfdom as a relatively desirable state. "If society is to endure, . . . it will be necessary to re-establish it."⁶² Possibly these declarations were but the outbursts of a transient mood; yet they betray sufficiently the sentiments which he harbored toward the lower classes.

One truly interested in the advancement of civilization should be intent upon the preservation of ancient popular usages, especially those whose cultural worth resides in the maintenance of the spiritual and particularly the religious life. In many respects Luther proved himself an enemy of the popular customs of the Middle Ages, because he suspected hidden idolatry in those quite indifferent customs of which the people had become fond and which were rooted in primitive ages. He passionately declaimed not only against the abuses which were connected with them; but, although he was himself descended from the common people, he blindly combated popular usages which were characteristic and educational.

A proof of this, among others, is contained in the memorandum which he presented to the Elector of Saxony during the diet of Augsburg, in 1530. This memorandum was connected with his object of

⁵⁹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 577, n. 1.

⁶⁰ *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 57.

⁶¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 74.

⁶² *Ibid.*

promoting a scheme which he had devised for the purification of the Church.⁶³ The lengthy list of "abuses" was intended, according to his own words, to make known "the great, nay, atrocious injuries which were inflicted upon souls and consciences."

It impresses one as strange that he includes the custom of St. John's fire, which has remained popular even to the present day. The people build a bonfire in mid-summer, on June 24. It was taken over from paganism, but divested of its heathen accompaniments. Similarly he condemns the use of St. John's wine, which was taken on December 27, the feast of the Apostle John. He does not spare either the innocent celebration of St. Martin's eve, with its old custom of children bearing lights, or the ancient German funeral banquets, which were primarily arranged for the benefit of mourners who had come from afar.

Luther condemned the very popular semi-dramatic plays, inherited from the devout and childlike Middle Ages. They were presented on the high feast-days of the Church with a view to elevate the minds of the faithful, and required only a little refurbishing here and there to be entirely acceptable. Such were the cherished Christmas plays enacted at the manger of the Christ Child; the Palm Sunday procession with the figure of Christ riding on an ass; the solemn processional veneration of the Holy Cross during the last days of Holy Week; the customary touching celebration of the Resurrection, symbolized by the elevation of the Cross above the tomb; the dramatic representation of the Ascension by means of a statue rising on high; and the coming of the Holy Ghost by means of an ornamented dove. These were all extremely ancient popular usages, which had taken deep root and imparted ardor to the religious life of the people. It goes without saying that a general war of extermination was declared on all specifically Catholic customs.

How profoundly the religious life of the people was affected by these changes may be seen from the fact that the above-mentioned memorial proposed to abolish all confraternities with their religious demonstrations, which were so frequently inspiring, all pilgrimages and processions, the customary blessing of the fields by devout processions with the Cross, and the elevating public solemnities in commemoration of the departed on All Souls'. Furthermore the use of bells, candles, candlesticks, banners and the vestments worn at divine service.

It was also proposed to discontinue the custom of carrying biers into church. The offering of the pence during divine services was to be proscribed. The veiling of images during the season of Lent, as well as the hanging up of the so-called black cloth that covered the altar during Lent,

⁶³ *Briefwechsel*, Vol. VII, pp. 256 sqq. (March, 1550.)

were to be discontinued. All these practices were dear to the people. Fasting, the recitation of the Divine Office, the solemn rites of consecration, the ceremony of the washing of the feet on Maundy Thursday, the use of Holy Water, and the celebration of the Roman Jubilee were to be inhibited.

Further study of Luther's writings shows that an endless number of other deep-seated religious customs, which reflected the active participation of the people in the life of the Church, were condemned to extinction.

Divine worship and the religious life of the people necessarily languished after the forcible abolition of these popular customs. The radical innovations of Lutheranism, so foreign to human feeling, produced ruins where formerly the seeds of civilization had been strewn in abundance, even though they were frequently in need of better care in order to blossom forth vigorously. The aging Luther did not sense this very noticeable decline of cultural life, but imagined that he had taught the people to worship God in the spirit, whilst even among his own followers complaints were rife that he failed to do adequate justice to human nature, which, in the final analysis, is a composite of body and soul.

On the other hand, he admitted the existence of other and, in some respects, even greater ruins. They are touched upon here only in passing, since most of them have been treated of in a previous part of this work.

He saw domestic life undermined as a consequence of his arbitrary loosening of the conjugal tie. His parsons importuned him on this point with endless letters. Poignantly and frequently he sensed the decline of the liberty of the Church resulting from the intervention of civil authority. The position of his jurists, who partly endeavored to observe the old canon law and partly favored the religious innovations, became impossible. Ecclesiastical regulations and consistories but too frequently proved inadequate aids, until they assumed the character of administrative governmental measures. Luther witnessed a certain decline in the power of the Schmalkaldic League after the Landgrave of Hesse had drawn closer to the Emperor. He heard the coming uproar of the religious war and trembled for its issue, knowing scarcely any consolation but the day of judgment. The empire itself, its unity and power, and especially the authority of the Emperor, were weakened to their very foundation. That his work was one of the causes of the unhappy condition of the empire was a thought which he had to bear to his grave.

The ruins which Luther saw round about him, did not, however, prevent him from asserting his claims. He did not live to see the decisive defeat of the Schmalkaldians at Mühlberg.

3. AT DEATH'S DOOR

The last will and testament which Luther made during his severe illness in 1537 at Gotha upon his return from the Schmalkaldian conference, boldly declared that he had done right in "storming" the papacy "with the aid of God's Word."⁶⁴ A second and final testament, dated January 6, 1542, the original of which is preserved in the Archives of the Augsburg Confession at Budapest, refers with equal solemnity to his claim that "the Father of all mercies has entrusted to him the Gospel of His beloved Son." He styles himself "God's notary and witness in His Gospel."⁶⁵

This testament, as well as the first, lacks the necessary legal formalities. His controversy with the lawyers, who refused to regard his marriage as valid and his five children as his legitimate heirs, induced him to disregard the notarial form and accounts for the fact that he styles himself a notary of God, whereby he sought to justify himself, and also for the high-sounding words he used in that document: "Let it be admitted that I am the kind of person which I truly am, namely, public, one who is known in heaven and on earth, as well as in hell, and who possesses sufficient reputation and authority to be trusted and believed in preference to any notary." At the same time he styles himself a "condemned, poor, undeserving, miserable sinner."

He testifies in this document that his "dear and faithful house-wife, Catherine," "ever treated him with love, appreciation, and affection as an upright and faithful consort." He demands that his children should "look into her hands," not she into theirs. He bequeathes to her his estate at Zulsdorf and a house he had purchased from Bruno Bauer; also his "goblets and jewels, such as rings, chains, and show coins, of gold and silver," valued at about 1,000 gulden. These bequests, however, were subject to the obligation of liquidating his debts, which amounted to approximately 450 gulden. Ready cash,

⁶⁴ Text *ibid.*, Vol. XI, pp. 209 sq., of February 28, 1537. Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 436 sq.

⁶⁵ Text in *Briefwechsel*, Vol. XIV, pp. 149 sq.

he says, he had none, owing to the expense of keeping their house in repair and maintaining the household. The monastery in which he resided automatically reverted to the Elector, whom he requests "graciously to guard and administer" his legacy to Catherine. The authenticity of his signature is confirmed at the bottom of the document by Melanchthon, Cruciger, and Bugenhagen. An imperial decree required that a testament which was not drawn up by a notary, should bear signatures of seven witnesses, together with their seals. But the elector supplied these deficiencies and officially confirmed Luther's last will and testament on April 11, 1546.

At the age of sixty, Luther wrote to his elector, on March 30, 1544, that he was "old and cold and ungainly, weak and sickly." He feared that evil times were coming, but the consolation of the "dear Word of God," and of prayer, would ever remain to his territorial lord. "The devil, the Turk, the Pope and his followers, cannot enjoy" these two unspeakable treasures.⁶⁶ This, in a certain sense, was his farewell letter to his protector.

The sufferings of which Luther complained were constriction of the chest and heart, a result of hardening of the arteries, and renewed "phobias," in addition to the extraordinary nervousness which accompanied him throughout life; finally, dizzy spells and pains from gall-stone.

Notwithstanding his afflictions, he continued to take part in literary controversies almost until his last breath.

Immediately after the publication of his treatise "Wider das Papsttum zu Rom vom Teufel gestiftet," he issued a description of the attitude of Popes Hadrian IV and Alexander III towards the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa.⁶⁷ It was translated from the Latin history of the popes by Robert Barnes—a thoroughly unreliable and hostile book, which Luther furnished with a preface and annotations. This pamphlet was intended to incite the temporal rulers of his time against the papacy, which was charged with contempt for, and abuse of, princes. The prefaces to the various sections of the second volume of his collected German writings, and the still more important prefaces to those of the first volume of his Latin works in the Wittenberg edition, date from 1545. In the general preface to the latter volume he essays a historical presentation of the origin and develop-

⁶⁶ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. VI, p. 341.

⁶⁷ Erl. ed., Vol. XXXII, pp. 358 sqq.

ment of his agitated life.⁶⁸ This narrative is a strongly colored and deliberate recasting of his early career. "The picture of his youth is made to tally more and more with the convictions of his later years."⁶⁹ It may be well to make a résumé of this artificial account in its main outlines, since Protestant biographers accept it as the truth. According to this fiction, Luther was a blameless, penitent monk, who was swept into the controversy with the Church only by his unavoidable opposition to the abuses connected with the sale of indulgences. At first he was unaware of the stupendous theological abyss which separated him from the teaching of the Church and quite unconscious of his ardent desire to obtain recognition for the dogmatic system which he had excogitated for the sake of quieting his neurotic fears. Until he got into the controversy with Tetzel, Luther was a simple monk who had died to the world and was given to heroic mortifications, seeking nothing else but a merciful God. But he was unable to discover this merciful God in the monastery and, as a result of grueling experiences, became convinced that God was not in the papacy. While he was engaged in public controversy about indulgences, in 1518, he was suddenly enlightened on the truth that man is justified by faith alone.

No further word is necessary on the perverted form in which he desired to hand down to posterity the development of his theoretical ideas by means of the preface to his collected Latin works. The whole incident is characteristic of the controversial spirit that moved him to the last. The fiction thus concocted was intended to be a blow to the Catholic Church and a vindication of his agitated life.

In 1545 he issued a pamphlet against the theologians of Louvain University, who had taken a stand against him at the outset of his career. In a certain sense, this pamphlet was a return to the beginning of his religious innovation. The Louvain theologians had published thirty-two articles against him in the previous year. He replied in seventy-six antitheses, "Against the Louvain Theologasters," of which his Protestant biographer Köstlin says that they are "abusive and derisive rather than convincing."⁷⁰ It had been his intention to expand this pamphlet into a treatise entitled, "Against the Asses in

⁶⁸ *Opp. Lat. Var.*, I, pp. 15 sqq.

⁶⁹ Thus Hausrath; see Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. VI, p. 191. For the following cf. ch. XXXVII of the same volume: "Umdichtung des jungen Luther durch den alternden."

⁷⁰ *Opp. Lat. Var.*, IV, pp. 486 sqq.; German in the Erl. ed. of his works, Vol. LXV, pp. 169 sqq. Cfr. Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, Vol. II, p. 609.

Paris and Louvain," but death snatched the pen from his hand before he was able to complete it.⁷¹ As a definite determination of his doctrinal position, the two last-mentioned productions, inspired by an unbroken opposition to the ancient religion, are significant, in so far as they categorically repeat his three principal dogmas, the articles of the "standing and falling Church," as he termed them; *i. e.*, that of justification and grace, that of the law, and that of sin continuously inherent in man. To study theology without these articles he said, as his opponents in those learned seats of harlotry did, was like trying to teach an ass to play the lyre. Among his past publications was his reply to a "mendacious pamphlet"⁷² describing his alleged frightful death; also various hymns and prefaces.

Archbishop Albrecht of Mayence, who did not embrace Lutheranism, figures in Luther's letters as the "pestilence of all Germany" down to the very end of his correspondence. Albrecht departed this life on September 24, 1545, at peace with the Church. During the years 1542 and 1543, as mentioned above, this ecclesiastical prince had associated intimately with Morone and Blessed Peter Faber, whom he kept near him. He issued commendable regulations for the protection and prosperity of the Church during his declining years.⁷³ As late as 1542, Luther had ridiculed the cardinal-elector because of the latter's collection of relics and distributed among the masses a fabricated list of these. This list mentions "a piece of the left horn of Moses, three flames from the burning bush on Mt. Sinai, two wings and one egg of the Holy Ghost," etc. The pamphlet was characterized by lawyers as a public libel (*libellus famosus*) against a prince of the empire, which was punishable at law. Luther wrote to Jonas that even if his pamphlet were a libel in the legal acceptation of the term, which was impossible, he nevertheless claimed the right to write thus "against the cardinal, the pope, the devil and all their crew." If he lived long enough, he hoped to tread yet another measure with the bride of Mayence, despite asses and jurists.⁷⁴ The reforms which the

⁷¹ G. Buchwald, *Luthers letzte Streitschrift* (Leipzig, 1893). In the fragment published by Buchwald, Luther declares that the theologians of Louvain and Paris were doomed to hell (*absque dubio peribunt*) and that the same fate would overtake the respective rulers, unless they opposed them.

⁷² Erl. ed., Vol. XXXII, pp. 426 sqq.

⁷³ Cfr. L. Cardauns, *Zur Geschichte der Kirchl. Unions- und Reformbestrebungen*, 1910, pp. 210-276.

⁷⁴ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, p. 293.

cardinal, in his zeal for religion, endeavored to introduce, had excited the wrath of Luther, who, after the dignitary's death, unhesitatingly consigned him to hell.

Luther's rudeness enabled him to gain the victory in his contest with the lawyers of the imperial consistory in the matter of the validity of "clandestine marriages" contracted without parental consent. In January, 1544, he delivered a sermon which contained brutal attacks against the jurists who opposed his attitude in this matter. Never before in his life, not even in his controversy with the pope, he says, had he been so much agitated as in these contentious days.⁷⁵ In this connection, he was also agitated by an affair of his own house. Caspar Beier, a student, endeavored to dissolve a clandestine marriage which he had contracted, in order to take another wife. Only with the special aid of the elector, Luther succeeded in having all such marriages declared invalid until the consent of the parents had been obtained, or until a decree had been delivered by the consistory which pronounced parental resistance as groundless. The "divine precept" of preaching the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, which, he said, had been entrusted to him, finally won the day and he triumphantly conducted Beier to his new bride. No one was able to resist the all-powerful dictator. Catherine Bora had assisted Beier, who was a relative of hers, in winning the intervention of Luther on his behalf. Cruciger on this occasion called her "the domestic torch" (*fax domestica*).⁷⁶

4. LUTHER'S DEATH

Despite his weakened condition, Luther, at the beginning of October, 1545, undertook a journey to Mansfeld. Count Albert of Mansfeld, a protagonist of Lutheranism, had solicited his aid in the adjustment of some lawsuits in which he was involved with his brother Gebhard and his nephew on account of certain revenues from mines and various legal claims. This first journey to Mansfeld was followed by a second, on Christmas. Luther requested Melanchthon to accompany him, which the latter did grumbly, as he disliked to listen to the quarrels of contentious people. When Melanchthon took sick, Luther returned with him to Wittenberg. The litiga-

⁷⁵ *Op. cit.*, VI, 358 sq.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

tion at Mansfeld induced him to set out, in January, 1546, for his native city of Eisleben, which was also to be the city of his death. Undoubtedly, these frequent journeys were inspired, at least in part, by that unrest which so often leads men to change their habitation at the approach of death, and also by that discontent with Wittenberg which had driven him to visit Zeitz, Merseburg, and Leipsic but a short time previously.

On the twenty-third of January, in spite of the rigors of the winter, Luther once more left Wittenberg, accompanied by his sons, their tutor and his amanuensis, John Aurifaber, the future editor of the Table Talks. At Halle he was compelled to spend three days with Jonas on account of floating ice in the Saale river. The devil, he wrote, dwells in the water, but he was resolved not to get drowned to give the pope and his myrmidons cause for delight.⁷⁷ In a sermon delivered in Halle he poured forth his anger against popery and demanded the expulsion of the "lousy monks" who still remained in that locality. "You ought to drive the imbecile, sorry creatures out of town!" On January 28, he and his escort, which now included Jonas, resumed their journey across the swollen Saale. Whilst riding in his carriage in the vicinity of Eisleben, the bitter wind caused him to experience difficulty in breathing, vertigo, and great debility. "The devil always plays me this trick," so he consoled himself, "when I have something great on hand." Arrived at his destination, he jocosely wrote to Catherine that the Jews who lived at Rissdorf had raised the cold wind against him and attempted to turn his brain to ice.

The litigant counts and their counselors were already present in Eisleben. They assigned the house of the town-clerk, which still stands, to Luther, Jonas, and Aurifaber, and liberally provided for their sustenance. Luther extols the Naumburg beer, says that his three sons had gone on to Jena; two of them returned to the narrow quarters at Eisleben, but spent a great deal of their time in Mansfeld, which lay close by. Luther's friend, Coelius, who was court-preacher in Mansfeld, was also in the house. Luther entertained his friends every evening in a room on the ground-floor beneath the quarters which he occupied; he enjoyed his meals, drank heartily, and exhibited a jovial disposition. When Catherine again expressed fears about his health, he replied in a jocose vein, giving her an account

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

of all that her anxious thoughts had brought upon him: the fire that broke out just in front of his door, had almost burnt him up; the plaster that fell down from the ceiling of his room had nearly killed him. "I fear, if you don't put your fears to rest, the earth will finally open and swallow us up."⁷⁸

While he sojourned at Eisleben, Luther preached four sermons, which severely taxed his strength. In one of them he attacked the Jews, contending that, if they did not become Christians, the rulers were obliged to expel them. He upbraided the Jews of Mansfeld not only for hating the Christians, but also for cheating them and practicing usury—which charge was not without justification. In assailing the Jews he was well aware that the Countess of Mansfeld was regarded as their protectress. Twice Luther partook of the Lord's Supper while at Eisleben, after having "absolution" administered to him, as is reported. On the occasion of his second communion, he ordained two priests, in conformity with what he alleged was apostolic practice.

He was annoyed to find that the negotiations designed to effect a reconciliation between the counts proceeded in an extremely tedious manner. He blamed the devil for the stubborn resistance that was offered to the proposals of mediation put forth by the experts and by himself. All the devils, he said, had convened at Eisleben to cast mockery upon his efforts in this sorry affair. He writes that he was prepared to rush in upon the disputants like a "hobgoblin" and "to grease the wagon with his anger." In the excess of his excitement he experienced the above-mentioned hallucination of the devil seated on a fountain—a scene which, as Coelius writes, caused him to shed tears because of the malicious indecency which Satan exhibited towards his person. In the end a satisfactory settlement was reached. On February 14 he wrote to his "dear and amiable wife": "God has shown great favor here; for the rulers have practically settled all their differences with the aid of their councilors." He announced at the same time: "We expect to return home this week, if it so please God."

On February 16, sickness and death were the topics of a very lively discussion during supper, according to the notations of Aurifaber. During these discourses, Luther said: "When I shall arrive at home

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 373 sq.

in Wittenberg, I shall lay me in a coffin and offer the maggots an obese doctor to feed on." ⁷⁹ As yet, he did not anticipate that death would overtake him at Eisleben.

Worry over the religious situation to some extent diverted Luther's thoughts from the fate which confronted him. He learned how strictly the Emperor insisted upon submission to the Council which had already begun; how fruitless were the proceedings of the religious conference at Ratisbon; how, after the failure of all attempts at reunion, the empire was preparing for the oft-threatened war against the Schmalkaldians. Other disquieting reports were brought by Prince Wolfgang von Anhalt and Count Henry von Schwarzburg, two friends of Luther, who had come to Eisleben to act as arbitrators for the counts of Mansfeld. "The Emperor is unalterably opposed to us," sighed Luther; "he reveals now what he has hitherto concealed." His solicitude for his elector inspired him to utter these words: "God save our gracious Lord; he is due for a struggle!" On one occasion he absented himself from his fellow-boarders, as they were at supper, exhorting them to "pray for the realization of the designs of God, that it may go well with the affairs of the Church; the Council of Trent displays a great deal of indignation."

At the same time, his spirit was wrapped in gloom because of the violent opposition that developed on the part of the Swiss and other Sacramentarians to his doctrine of the Last Supper. These renewed attacks had been called forth by his recently published "Brief Confession." His displeasure with them was undoubtedly heightened because of the further fact that he reread those of his works in which he had vented his anger during the controversy on the Eucharist, and which were included in the volume of his German works just then in course of publication. Hence, in his sermons at Eisleben, he paid his respects to the Sacramentarians and in forceful words warned his hearers against the arbitrary interpretation of Sacred Scripture by "that prostitute, human reason." His last notes, written on Feb. 16, 1546, appear to be a reference to the misuse of the Bible by the Sacramentarians. "No one," he says, "has sufficiently tasted the Sacred Scriptures who has not governed churches with the prophets for a hundred years." He claims, moreover, that one must have been a shepherd or a farmer for five years in order to understand the *Bucolicks* and *Georgics* of Vergil; and, in order to appreciate Cicero's let-

⁷⁹ *Tischreden*, Weimar ed., Vol. VI, n. 6975.

ters, it was necessary for one to have spent twenty-five years in the service of an important state.⁸⁰ Shortly before he had inscribed in the postil of a friend the following words, based upon John VIII, 51, which sound like a presentiment of death: "If any man keep my word, he shall not see death forever." In this connection he also wrote: "Blessed in the Word is he who believes and goes to sleep and dies over it."⁸¹ This was a favorite thought with him. Frequently during these days he also quoted the text: "God so loved the world," etc., which he undertook to explain in a lengthy address to his friends.

The first indication that his heart trouble was growing worse was noticed on the 17th of February, when he grew restless and said, among other things: "Here at Eisleben I was baptized. What if I were to remain here?" In the evening he was seized with oppression on the chest, a pain he had experienced in former ailments. He felt relieved when rubbed with hot cloths and went down for supper with his companions, with whom he ate and drank copiously in his usual jovial mood, recounting anecdotes and participating in the serious discussions which were carried on. Among other things the mutual recognition of friends in Heaven was debated. In Heaven, he said, we shall recognize each other in virtue of the illuminating spirit of God, who caused Adam immediately to recognize Eve as flesh of his flesh, whom He had built from a rib taken from his own body whilst he was asleep. He also discussed his own death and the devil. He said he had lived to be sixty-three years of age in order that he might witness all the malice, faithlessness, and misery which was caused by the devil in the world. The human race is like sheep being led to slaughter.⁸² Shortly afterwards he repaired to his room. It was still early in the evening; he recited his prayers at the open window, as was his custom, and then retired for the night.

While at prayer, a new severe attack of heart oppression came on. His friends again hurried to his aid, tried to give him relief by rubbing him with hot cloths. He got an hour's sleep on a sofa in his room, after Count Albrecht, who had been summoned, and his relatives offered him various remedies. He refused to have the doctors called, as he did not think there was any danger. Having told his friends, who in the meantime had come to see him, to retire, he

⁸⁰ *Briefwechsel*, Vol. XVII, p. 60.

⁸¹ Köstlin-Kawerau, *Martin Luther*, Vol. II, p. 620,

⁸² Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, pp. 376 sq.

withdrew to his chamber. Jonas and a servant, Rudfeld by name, had a couch in the same room, which was small and lacking in ventilation. The couch which Luther occupied may still be found in the self-same crowded room. He slept in his bed only from ten or eleven o'clock until about one in the morning, when he got up and awakened Jonas, saying to him: "Oh, my God, how ill I feel!" Aided by Jonas and the servant he dragged himself into the sitting-room, saying he would probably die at Eisleben after all, and repeating the prayer: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit!" As he lay outstretched on the couch, the constriction of his heart became unbearable.

The inmates of the house, the counts and the princes, who appeared at intervals to express their solicitude and sympathy, were kept informed of the condition of the patient. Two physicians, one a doctor and the other a master of medicine, were hurriedly summoned. Before they appeared, however, the malady had completely overcome the patient. They found him lying on the couch unconscious and with no perceptible pulse. After a brief interval, however, Luther recovered consciousness, and, bathed in the cold sweat of death, was heard to exclaim: "My God, I am so ill and anxious; I am going." He also recited some prayers, in which he expressed his thanks to God for having revealed to him His Son Jesus Christ, in whom he believed, whilst the hateful pope had blasphemed Him.⁸³ Thrice he repeated the familiar verse: "God so loved the world," etc. In vain Count Albrecht and his relatives offered strengthening or refreshing draughts to the patient. As he again lay practically unconscious, Jonas and Coelius, in order to obtain a confession from him in the presence of the attendants, shouted into his ear the question whether he remained steadfast in the faith in Christ and His doctrine which he had preached; to which they caught the reply: "Yes." That was his last word. He did not recall his life's partner at Wittenberg, nor did he mention his children. It seems the stroke had stupefied him and blotted out the memory of those dear to him.

About three o'clock in the morning Luther drew a deep breath and departed this life to return his soul into the hands of the eternal Judge. It was a frosty morning (February 18, 1546), and the earth was still veiled in darkness.

During this last crisis, or soon after, John Landau, an apothecary

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

of Eisleben, was sent for with the request to attempt to restore animation by the application of a clyster. Landau was a convert to the Catholic Church and a nephew of the famous controversialist Wicel. He came at once, but, after examining Luther, who had already departed this life, declared: "He is dead; of what use can an injection be?" The physicians, however, insisted upon a try with the instrument, so that the patient might again come to himself if there still was life in him. When the apothecary inserted the nozzle he noticed some flatulency given off into the ball of the syringe. The two physicians disputed together as to the cause of death. The doctor said it was a fit of apoplexy, for the mouth was drawn down and the whole of the right side discolored. The master, on the other hand, maintained that so holy a man could not have been stricken down by the hand of God and that it was rather the result of a suffocating catarrh and that death was due to choking. Neither knew anything of Luther's chronic disease affecting the arteries of the heart.⁸⁴ The true cause of his death was neither apoplexy nor catarrh.

After Luther's death, all the distinguished guests assembled in his chamber. Jonas, who sat at the head of the bed, wrung his hands and wept aloud. He assured the others that Luther had been more cheerful on the previous evening than for many a day. "Oh, God Almighty, God Almighty!" he exclaimed. The apothecary wasbidden to administer a thorough rubbing to the nose, mouth, forehead, and left side of the corpse with a costly scented fluid which the counts had brought. The guests still expected to see signs of life and remarked that on several former occasions Luther had lain for a long time motionless and was thought to be dead, for instance, at Schmalkalden, in 1537, when he was tormented with gall-stone. The apothecary soon ascertained that rigor mortis had set in. Jonas then suggested that a detailed report be at once dispatched by courier to the Elector of Saxony. About four o'clock in the morning, he composed a comprehensive account of the event, assisted by Coelius and Aurifaber.

⁸⁴ Cf. the opinion of Dr. Guido Jochner in the Innsbruck *Zeitschrift für katbol. Theologie*, Vol. 45 (1921), pp. 486 sqq., and also that of Dr. Tscharnak in Janssen-Pastor, Vol. III (18 ed.), p. 601. Of material importance is Jonas's letter in Kawerau's edition of his correspondence, Vol. II, pp. 182 sq., where he says Luther suffered from heart disease in the year before his death. In Iob. Manlii *Libellus Medicus* (Bâle, 1563), pp. 24 sq., it is stated that καρδιακή i.e., heart disease, was the cause of Luther's death. Manlius also says: "Paulo ante mortem mibi scripsit, se eo morbo rursum tentatum esse." Melanchthon wrote to V. Theodorus (Corp. Ref., VI, p. 68): "Non apoplexia, non asthmate extinctus est." But the real cause of Luther's death he did not know either.

In the meantime the corpse, still lying on the couch, was re-arranged so as to enable the expected visitors to obtain a better view of it. After sunrise Luther's friends sent for a painter to draw the features of the departed. The picture, which represents Luther lying on the couch, was unsatisfactory and a second picture, based in part on the first, was made the following day. The painter of the second picture was Lucas Fortenagel of Halle; when he went to work, Luther already lay in his coffin. This portrait is preserved in the university library of Leipsic, which also preserves a less perfect representation depicting Luther's head as resting on a pillow. It is probable that this latter picture is the one drawn immediately after his demise.

If a Catholic opponent of Luther, familiar with his life and deeds, a man noble-minded and sympathetic of heart, had entered that room in the morning after the reformer's death, what would have been his thoughts? Above all else he would have implored God to be merciful to the soul of the departed man, thus complying with the teaching of Him who commands men to love even their worst enemies. Then, there would have flashed before his mind's eye the monstrous and embittered attacks launched by Luther upon that sacred institution, the indestructible Church established by Jesus Christ at the price of His blood and founded upon Peter and his successors. In spirit, he would have beheld the deep wounds inflicted upon that Church by this man, so remarkably endowed with eloquence, will-power, and energy. How many thousands of souls redeemed by Christ, he would have said to himself, have been torn from the Saviour's living body by this man, without any fault of their own, and frequently without their knowledge, bequeathing their misfortune to posterity. But yielding to mercy, he would also have recalled the fateful enthusiasm of the dead reformer for his own cause, and that profound and serious self-delusion which domineered his ardent temperament with ever increasing force since the inception of his contest with Rome. Did not Luther, thus the spectator might have soliloquized, eventually find himself in a state of true mental obsession, though, of course, of his own volition and which, at least in its inception, had been caused by himself? Was it an obsession which allowed him to see naught else but his supposed vocation as the promulgator of a new and true Gospel, directed against Antichrist and the demoniac forces, just as he imagined the imminent dissolution of the world and the advent of the

Great Judge? Did this delusion, in the evening of his life, incapacitate him for receiving even one ray of light?

If our hypothetical friend, thus absorbed in reflection at the bier of Luther, had been granted an insight into the mental evolution of the deceased, *i. e.*, into his psychological condition since he left the parental roof, his frightening experiences at entering the monastery, as well as the state of despondency and the constant struggles caused by his disease, he would have felt all the more inclined to pronounce a charitable judgment on the dead reformer. Was Luther a great man? he might have asked himself, as he left the chamber of death impressed by these reflections. There could be no other answer than this: If he is to be called great, his greatness is negative. As our observer later in life recalled the stirring scene in Luther's death chamber, he might have entertained the hope that the misguided reformer would be saved. Janssen, the great Catholic historian who penetrated so deeply into the inwardness of the Reformation period, used to recommend to converts who sought his guidance to pray for the repose of Luther's soul.⁸⁵ God alone searches the hearts and reins of men. Human understanding is too limited.

The account we have given of the circumstances of Luther's demise is based, first, on the report made the same day by Jonas to the Elector; secondly, on letters written by other eye-witnesses either on the day of Luther's death or immediately afterwards; thirdly, on the account of the Catholic apothecary Landau, on the funeral orations, and especially on the "Historia" of Luther's death composed at Wittenberg by Jonas, Coelius, and Aurifaber and apparently published about the middle of March.⁸⁶ While it cannot be denied that the letter of Jonas and the "Historia" contain palpable exaggerations concerning the pious aphorisms and prayers of Luther—expressions of devotion of which he was hardly capable in consequence of his

⁸⁵ Cited by Pastor toward the close of his biography of Janssen.

⁸⁶ The "Historia" in Walch's edition of Luther's Works, Vol. XXI, pp. 280 sqq. Landau's account first appeared in Cochlaeus, *Ex Compendio Actorum M. Lutheri* (Moguntiae, 1548; cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. VI, p. 379, n. 2). All the accounts of Luther's death were more recently collected by Jak. Strieder, *Bericht über Luthers letzte Lebensstunden* (1912; cfr. the same writer's article, *Luthers letzte Stunden*, in the *Histor. Vierteljahsschrift*, 1912, No. 3), and Christoph Schubart, *Die Berichte*, etc., (1917), which contains a more detailed account based on all the letters. The best exposition according to the sources is supplied by N. Paulus, *Luthers Lebensende* (1898), whose conclusions have not been affected by the less important sources which have since come to light.

repeated lapses into unconsciousness,⁸⁷ there is, however, no adequate warrant for impugning the substantial credibility of this and other accounts, as has been done in recent times. In view of certain accounts that originated in foreign countries and were written for polemical purposes, it has been asserted that Luther was found dead in bed at day-break, and that, accordingly, all the occurrences reported of the night of his death are fictions invented for the purpose of concealing the disagreeable facts in the case. But such a colossal deception was an impossibility because of the large number and the rank of those who knew the facts at first hand, including several women. The calm and detailed account which Landau, the Catholic apothecary, published in 1548, absolutely forbids the acceptance of the above-noted arbitrary theory of deception. Moreover, a falsification of facts, such as is here supposed, would most assuredly have assumed a different form. It would not have failed to mention that Luther spoke affectionately of his Catherine, and to describe a touching scene in which the dying father bade farewell to his children.

The fable of Luther's alleged suicide, which some writers (notably P. Majunke) have exploited in recent years, is based on an apocryphal letter, attributed to an alleged servant of Luther, whose name is not mentioned. It was circulated about twenty years after Luther's death among his opponents, particularly in foreign countries. The story of the unknown servant was mentioned for the first time in a book which the Italian Oratorian, Thomas Bozius, published at Rome in 1591. The Franciscan, Henry Sedulius, was the first to print the text of the letter in a book published at Antwerp in 1606. In this letter, the servant is quoted as stating that he discovered "our Master Martin suspended from his bed, wretchedly strangulated."⁸⁸

The fable belongs to a category of inventions, quite common at the time, devised for the purpose of imputing a disgraceful death to an opponent, especially if he happened to be an ecclesiastic. Many prominent men were made to die in despair and impenitent, or to terminate their lives by suicide.⁸⁹ Luther himself was notorious for this

⁸⁷ In the *Lutherkalender* for 1911, p. 93, A. Spaeth concedes that the first letter of Jonas and the "Historia," may have been inspired by a desire to represent Luther's death in as favorable and edifying a manner as possible.

⁸⁸ In the *Allg. Deutsche Biographie*, Vol. LII (1900), pp. 156 sq., we read that the fable of Luther's suicide is no longer defended by any serious Catholic, nay, that Catholics have been among its foremost opponents.

⁸⁹ Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, II, 303 sq.

form of fabrication, and readily placed credence in reports of this kind.

Strange, too, are the amplifications made by certain authors regarding the legends of Luther's decease. It is claimed that he had "his nun" with him on the fatal night of his death; yea, that Catherine Bora strangled him during a quarrel. Others allege that the devil either carried him off alive or murdered him.

The above-noted accounts of Luther's death are not surprising in view of the mass of false statements made about the reformer in succeeding ages by short-sighted and uncritical Catholic authors, who were horrified at the way in which he ravished the Church. Thus it was alleged that he inwardly abandoned all his doctrines in his old age; that he contemplated a return to the papacy, without, however, being converted; that he said to Catherine on one occasion, as she admired the starry firmament, that heaven was not for them. It was asserted that he had three children apart from those born of his marriage; that he indulged in "orgies" with escaped nuns; that he began his fight upon the Church in order that he might be able to marry while yet a monk; that at a later date he advised people in writing to pray for many wives and few children; that he was the author of the saying: "Who loves not woman, wine, and song, remains a fool his whole life long."⁹⁰

Rumors were circulated especially about his inebriety and habitual excesses at table, which have already been mentioned, in connection with which certain misconstrued jokes were reproduced. It is claimed that he indulged excessively in eating and drinking on the eve of his death. He was described as extremely corpulent, a characteristic supposed to be verified by his own previously adduced phrase of the "obese doctor." He was rather stoutish, as the portraits of his corpse reveal; but this was only after he had reached middle age. Such exaggerations as that contained in the celebrated verse of Gothe's "Faust" are to be rejected.

His inveterate opposition to the pope, which he reaffirmed shortly before his death at Eisleben, was embellished by a very questionable flourish of his friend Ratzeberger, who was not even in Eisleben at the time. He informs us that Luther, as he partook of his last meal,

⁹⁰ These slanders are incidentally repudiated in our text; see also our larger work, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 280 sqq.; Vol. V, p. 372. On the charge of inebriety, cfr. Vol. III, pp. 294 sqq.

wrote the following celebrated verse on the wall with a piece of chalk: "*Pestis eram vivus, moriens ero mors tua, papa*" (In life, O Pope, I was thy plague, in dying I shall be thy death). The silence of other sources, particularly that of the panegyrics, where Luther's previous use of this verse is mentioned, renders Ratzeberger's account rather incredible.⁹¹ The so-called death-mask of Luther, preserved at Halle, is also the product of an erroneous Protestant tradition. According to the investigations of Frederick Loofs, professor of theology at Halle, it originated in the eighteenth century.⁹² There was a natural desire to have authentic memorials of the famous man. Likewise most of the objects exhibited at the present time as having supposedly been left behind by the deceased, are insufficiently attested.

Catholic controversialists distorted his obsequies.⁹³ They alleged that when the funeral procession arrived at Wittenberg, the coffin was found empty. According to others, the hearse had to be abandoned on the road to Wittenberg because of the horrible stench emanating from the corpse. A number of rooks circling in the air about the corpse at Halle were later made out to have been devils, "who came to attend the burial of their prophet." Persons who were possessed by the devil remained unmolested at that time, since all the devils were taking part in the funeral, and so forth. These tales merely prove how greatly the Catholics had been horrified at Luther's conduct.

Having waded through the legends occasioned by the death of Luther, we must now attend to his obsequies. The body was enclosed in a tin coffin at Eisleben. After Jonas and Coelius had delivered memorial addresses there, the remains were conveyed to Halle, on February 20, thence to Wittenberg, on the morning of February 22. At the Elster Gate—the scene of the famous burning of the Bull of Excommunication—the coffin was received by the university, the town-council, and the burghers, and escorted to the Schlosskirche, where, by order of the Elector, Luther's mortal remains were to find their last resting-place. On Feb. 22, they were interred in front of the pulpit, where they still rest at the present day.⁹⁴ It is worthy of note that the

⁹¹ Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 102; Vol. VI, pp. 377-394.

⁹² Loofs in *Religiöse Kunst* (1918), No. 1, pp. 2-15.

⁹³ Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 394 sqq.

⁹⁴ An investigation made February 14, 1892, revealed the presence of Luther's remains in the Schlosskirche at Wittenberg. Hence, they were not removed, as was charged, after the entry of the victorious imperial troops in the Schmalkaldic War.

day of Luther's interment was the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, or, as formerly known in the Catholic Church, the Feast of the Institution of the Papal Primacy.

When the procession that escorted the corpse arrived at the castle-church, Bugenhagen delivered a funeral oration. This was followed by a eulogy pronounced by Melanchthon. All the addresses delivered on this occasion, including those of Jonas and Coelius, previously referred to, have been preserved in print.⁹⁵ In the mind of Bugenhagen, Luther was "without doubt the angel of which the Apocalypse speaks in Chapter XIV: 'And I saw an angel flying through the midst of heaven, who had an eternal gospel to preach!'" God the Father, according to Bugenhagen, "revealed" the *evangelium aeternum*, the great mystery, through Luther, "the divinely appointed reformer of the Church." Melanchthon, in his funeral oration, similarly extolled the deceased as one of a long line of divine tools starting in Old Testament times, as a man taught by God and exercised in severe spiritual combats of a friendly nature, not at all passionate or quarrelsome, and only inclined to be violent when such medicine was required by the ailments of the age. He said Luther was endowed with all the gifts of God enumerated by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians (IV, 8), where he says: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame." Now, he concluded, he has gone to join the company of the prophets in Heaven.

No more impressive contrast to these eulogies can be conceived than the hymns of praise chanted by the Church on this very day in honor of Blessed Peter, and of his successor in the Apostolic See: "*Tu es Petrus*"—thou art Peter, the holder of the see, against whom the gates of hell shall not prevail.

In a bulletin in which he announced the death of Luther to the students of Wittenberg University, Melanchthon said: "Alas, the chariot of Israel and the driver thereof have departed (4 Kings, II, 12), who has ruled the Church in this old age of the world. Human wisdom has not discovered the doctrine of the remission of sins and fiduciary trust in the Son of God, but God has revealed it through this man."

In Coelius' address at Eisleben, Luther was represented as appearing a "true Elias and Jeremias," a "John the Baptist or an apostle before

⁹⁵ Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. VI, pp. 387 sqq., where excerpts are given.

the great day of the Lord." Jonas in his sermon prophesied that now all papists and monks would "turn to dust and perish," as Luther himself had frequently predicted as a consequence of his death; thus the death of the prophet would exercise a peculiar influence on the godless and impenitent; yea, within two years the deluded papists would be overtaken by a "dreadful punishment."

In harmony with these effusions medals were struck bearing Luther's celebrated verse, "*Moriens ero mors tua, papa.*" Epitaphs appeared both in verse and in prose, particularly at Wittenberg, replete with the most exaggerated praise. A noteworthy leaflet of this character, appearing anonymously, was probably the product of Paul Eber.⁹⁶ The shop of Cranach flooded Protestant Germany with portraits of Luther, which were of questionable worth. The defiant, coarse-grained nature of the man is strongly emphasized in these representations, which, though they by no means completely corresponded with each other, form the basis of the typical portrait of Luther which came into use later on. A cloud of spoken and written encomiums, uttered in the style of funeral sermons, overcast the memory of Luther, fascinated the impressionable masses and prevented thousands from obtaining a true insight into the facts of the case and the real character of the man.

5. AFTER LUTHER'S DEATH

The glorification of Luther by his biographers deserves a special treatment on account of its after-effects.

Among the earliest biographies, or rather the attempts at such, which were destined to establish the fame of Luther, mention must be made of the biographical sketch which Melanchthon published at the beginning of the second volume of Luther's Latin works, which appeared in 1546. The writer either closed his eyes to the defects of Luther's character, or excused them. In his admiration of Luther's greatness, he completely forgot the pique which he suffered at his hands.

John Mathesius, an enthusiastic disciple of Luther, but of no pronounced talent, while pastor of Joachimstal in Bohemia, delivered a

⁹⁶ O. Clemen, *Gedichte auf Luthers Tod*, in the *Jahrbuch der Luthergesellschaft* (1919), pp. 59 sqq.; the same, *Flugschriften aus den ersten Jahren der Reformation*, Leipsic, 1907; cfr. *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* (1922), pp. 137 sqq.

series of sermons on Luther which were crammed with historical and unhistorical assertions—"pious panegyrics," as they are properly styled by the Protestant historian William Maurenbrecher. In his eagerness to edify his hearers, Mathesius disregarded the facts. His sermons appeared in print at Nuremberg, in 1566, twenty years after Luther's death, under the title, "Historien von des ehrwürden in Gott seligen thewren Manns Gottes Doctoris M. Lutheri Anfang, Lehr, Leben und Sterben." Due to their popular style, they have enjoyed a wide circulation up to the present time.

In the same year, John Aurifaber, one of the witnesses of Luther's death, published at Eisleben his "Colloquia oder Tischreden" of Luther, to which we have already adverted. The preface, addressed to the "imperial cities of Strasburg, Augsburg, Ulm, Nuremberg," etc., eulogizes Luther as "the venerable and highly enlightened Moses of the Germans." The contents of this work, partly entertaining and partly instructive, display a popular and rather blunt style and wielded an incredibly powerful influence on the masses and thereby confirmed the domination of Luther over many minds. Others, notably Stangwald (1571) and Selnecker (1577), were inspired by Aurifaber's success to issue similar publications.⁹⁷

Cyriacus Spangenberg, a fanatical admirer of Luther, composed a book entitled, "Theander Lutherus," which was divided into sermons. The principal title is followed by a high-sounding, lengthy subtitle, which enables one to infer the tendency and worth of the whole work. In this subtitle Luther is called "the esteemed man of God," "a prophet," "an apostle," and "an evangelist," "the third Elias," "the second Paul," and "the true John," "a most excellent theologian," "the angel of the Apocalypse," etc. These sermons, delivered at Mansfeld in 1562, first appeared separately, but were afterwards published in a collective edition (1589). They did not, however, attain to the popularity of Mathesius' "Historien."⁹⁸

Flacius Illyricus, a professor at the University of Wittenberg, and Nicholas Amsdorf, were two of the most enthusiastic champions of Luther, who achieved eminence not by writing biographies of their hero, but by eulogizing and battling for him. Thus Flacius, in his book on "The Marks of the True Religion" (Magdeburg, 1549), treated of the mark of sanctity, which he discovered not only in the

⁹⁷ On these and other biographers of Luther see Grisar, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 388 sqq.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

doctrines of his deified master, but also in his extraordinarily pious life, abounding in examples of Christian virtue. Amsdorf, likewise, describes Luther as a saint, the equal of St. Paul. He maintains that Luther was "raised by a special grace and given to the German nation." He strongly stresses his German nationality. By laying emphasis on Luther's patriotism, efforts were put forth at a very early date to persuade the "German nation" of its obligation to honor its great leader. German nationality, German customs, and German patriotism were made to serve as effective levers to raise the figure of Luther to a high pedestal.

However, the authors just mentioned, like many later eulogists of Luther, cannot avoid painful references to the serious schisms and counter-currents of the time. Many theologians and preachers differ in their teaching from the so-called orthodox or Gnesio-Lutherans, without ceasing to extol Luther. Amsdorf complains about these "pretenders to wisdom," Flacius Illyricus fulminates against them as "apostates." Many were persecuted by the inflamed theologians of the new religion. Mathesius is alarmed at seeing "all sorts of impure and poisoned water" penetrating the "pipes of Wittenberg," through which the waters of life are dispensed.

What Luther had frequently foretold came to pass after his death. The profound theological controversies that agitated the schools and churches soon entailed the intervention of the civil governments. The names used to describe the controversies (such as Osiandric, Majorite, Adiaphoristic, and Synergistic disputes) are reminiscent of movements that were as replete with theological contrasts as with passions and hatred.⁹⁹ How the Gnesio-Lutherans, and particularly Flacius and his followers, were singled out for attack, may be seen from a cannon in the fortress of Coburg, cast at that time, in which the favorite court-preacher is portrayed in the act of seizing an adherent of Flacius by the throat and strangling him. In electoral Saxony, the classic land of the Lutheran Reformation, Cryptocalvinism, so-called, gained the ascendancy under the Elector August, who became ruler in 1553. The representatives of this movement published a *Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum*, extracted from the writings of Melanchthon, which deviated from the teaching of Luther. Although protected by the civil authorities, Melanchthon and the "Philippists,"

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 408 sqq.

as his followers were called, suffered much from the persecution of the Lutheran theologians.

More tranquil times dawned only after "orthodox" Lutheranism had established its rule. The extravagant praises of Luther resounded everywhere during this period; but soon the Age of Enlightenment came and effected a considerable decline of Luther's influence among scholars and the educated laity. The contradictory nature of his doctrines and their defects were more widely recognized and conclusions drawn from his premises which, while they were not illogical, would have been very unwelcome to Luther himself. Some even dared to criticize publicly the character and private life of the founder of Protestantism. Finally, the rise of the historicocritical method threatened to impair the esteem harbored for his doctrines and person. About the time of the centenary celebration of Luther's birth (1883), however, a reaction favorable to his reputation set in among influential Protestants in Germany. This was due to various circumstances, not the least of which was aggravated opposition to a newly ascendant Catholicism. In conformity with modern ideas, Luther was now hailed as a champion of liberty and civilization, a guide to a new spiritual future, as well as the representative of the national ideals and customs of Germany.¹⁰⁰ In the World War he was to be the hero of unadulterated and triumphant German tradition and inspiration; but the defeat of the Central Powers disappointed the audacious hopes of Lutheranism.¹⁰¹

In the meantime, especially since the revolution, the religion of Luther has, in many respects, assumed the rôle of a so-called "German religion" without dogmas. The Protestant churches, honoring his name as a symbol of their title, are actively engaged in securing their future under a new form, the former system of national churches having ceased to exist. Some laudably endeavor to preserve for Protestantism the positive Christian elements which Luther retained. In general, however, the religious Luther is relegated to the background. Though his admirers ought to consider him primarily as a religious

¹⁰⁰ Probably only a few individuals, however, regarded criticism as prohibited to such a degree as the author of a prominent jubilee book for 1917, who wrote: "After four hundred years, we do not feel justified in criticizing the shade of this great and singular man." But he admits that he "likes the Luther of the diet of Worms better than the Luther of the year 1545."

¹⁰¹ Cf. H. Grisar, *Der deutsche Luther im Weltkrieg und in der Gegenwart*, Augsburg, 1924.

innovator, they abandon, with striking unanimity, the religious phase, and, instead, celebrate Luther as a champion of modern culture. This became evident in 1917, at the time of the fourth centenary of the Reformation, and during the celebrations commemorative of that event in the ensuing years, such as that at Worms.¹⁰² A closer inspection of the voluminous scientific and popular literature of this period, and of the flood of published addresses delivered at the larger festival assemblies, elicit amazement at the thoroughness with which the historic Luther has been obliterated. His teaching is discarded as unimportant, and the highest aims of his life are tacitly treated as antiquated and obsolete. Public attention is directed to the excellence of his German style, the literary skill shown in his translation of the Bible, the popular appeal of his hymns, and, naturally, his alleged genuine "Germanism."¹⁰³ His undaunted courage was eulogized and his boast re-echoed throughout Germany: "No one, please God, shall awe me so long as I live."¹⁰⁴ Just as though the moral value of the ends pursued, as well as the morality of the means employed, are not a necessary element in evaluating courage and perseverance! This very defiance which would assail heaven, the very quality of "superman," induced many admirers to refer to Luther as a great historical phenomenon. Most of them, however, base their admiration upon something quite different. Luther's courage has begun to gain that unrestrained spiritual liberty which they desire to enjoy. Luther destroyed for his adherents the authority of the old Church. It is this destructive phase of his activity which makes him so important to our modern age. The freedom of the intellect which he won by his struggles, we are told, must be extended. Men must advance beyond the beginnings which he inaugurated, and strive for a more natural Christianity. In the attainment of this end Luther must be our guide. That is the slogan of the great majority of Protestant scholars.¹⁰⁵ Luther's responsibility for such a fate, which is tantamount

¹⁰² Grisar, *Lutherstudien*, n. 1: "Luther zu Worms und die jüngsten drei Jahrhundertfeste der Reformation," Freiburg, 1921.

¹⁰³ Grisar, *Die Literatur des Lutherjubiläums 1917, ein Bild des heutigen Protestantismus*, in the *Zeitschrift für kathol. Theologie*, Vol. XLII (1918), pp. 591-628 and 785-814.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. VI, pp. 396 sqq., where other similar passages are reproduced.

¹⁰⁵ According to Friedrich Loofs, *Wer war Jesus?* (Halle, 1916, p. 216), "all learned [Protestant] theologians of Germany—even those who do not express themselves openly—are agreed that the ancient orthodox theology of the two natures in Christ cannot be maintained in its traditional form." Belief in the divinity of Christ is relinquished. "All systematic theologians are seeking new ways in Christology." (Cf. p. 180).

to a disavowal of his life's work, cannot be denied. And yet, with the aid of Lutheran propositions, *i. e.*, a selection of his doctrines on the religion of Christ, reproduced in his own forceful language, it is possible to deliver a scathing indictment against the ever-increasing ranks of his admirers.

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