

CHAPTER X

THE SPREAD OF LUTHERANISM

I. METHODS OF PROPAGATION

If one were to investigate the means by which Lutheranism established and propagated itself, he would first of all discover the cunning practice of concealment which was indicated towards the close of the preceding section of this work.

The divine service was essentially altered, but suspicion was avoided as much as possible by retaining the external form, so that the common people, as Luther said, "would never become aware of it." It was to be done "without scandal."¹ In justification of this procedure, he asserted that the new religious practices must be "propagated without injury to charity." Thus it ought to be done, he wrote on a subsequent occasion, "if we are not to unsettle and confuse our churches without accomplishing anything against the papists." Melanchthon shared this view. "The world," he said, "is so much attached to the Mass that it seems well-nigh impossible to wrest people from it."² Hence, Luther, as a matter of principle, more frequently adopts a calculated accommodation than his impulsiveness would lead one to expect. When Martin Weier, a young student of good family from Pomerania, who was about to return home, asked him how he should behave in the matter of divine worship in the Catholic surroundings of his home and towards his father, who professed the ancient faith, Luther, according to his own account, told him "to fast, pray, attend Mass, and revere the saints, just as he had been doing before," but try to enlighten his father as much as possible; he would commit no wrong if he "took part in the Mass and other profanations for his father's sake."³ Yet, when referring to his previous practice of celebrating Mass in the monastery, Luther declared that he had offended

¹ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 321 sq.

² *Ib.*, p. 322.

³ *Ib.*, p. 323.

God most horribly, more so than if he had been "a highwayman or kept a brothel."

It was, undoubtedly, a serious matter thus to deceive the people, who, owing to the retention of the ancient ceremonies, regarded the service of the reformers as Catholic. Cochlaeus, in a tract, speaks of Luther's "hypocritical deception" of the masses.⁴ Luther was pleased to see that, despite the contrary urging of many an impetuous fanatic, his principle maintained the upper hand, namely, that anyone unable to understand the sermon, "be he a layman, whether Italian or Spaniard, seeing our Mass, choir, organs, bells, chantries, etc., would surely say that it was a regular papist church, and that there was no difference, or very little, between it and his own."⁵

The progress of Lutheranism was much aided by the favorable moral impression which the new movement made upon many, even well-intentioned Catholics. The reformers' frank criticism of existing evils attracted many who longed for an amelioration. The bold proposals to pursue other paths, brought forward by Luther with an air of intense zeal, allured the masses and their leaders. People heard of interior Christianity, which was to be opposed to exterior semblance, and of a spiritual liberty which was to overcome self-righteousness. A grand upward flight of virtue appeared to arise from the deceptive teaching that everything was to be done at the inspiration of a perfect love, without regard to the motive of fear or the expectation of reward. Seductive words were heard calling Christ the sole Saviour, who redeemed mankind without any merit on its part, and of the unconditioned rule of grace without human co-operation, which is really nothing but sin. These and other errors, which were dangled before the eyes of men, influenced many whose intentions were good, but who did not investigate more deeply. Only by and bye the true nature of the innovation as a complete religious revolution revealed itself to those who were able to see more clearly, especially after the publication of Luther's "Address to the Nobility" and his work "On the Babylonian Captivity."

Of those who afterwards combated the Reformation successfully

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 322.

⁵ *Ib.* Attention is called to the many borrowings from the Catholic cult still found among the Protestants of Denmark, Norway, and the duchies formerly united with the Danish crown, as a consequence of the method of concealment introduced in the North by Luther's disciple, Bugenhagen.

with their pens, quite a number at first were prepossessed in favor of Luther and his proceedings, e. g., Cochlaeus, Zasius, Witzel, Billikan, Vitus Amerbach, the aged Wimpfeling, and the humanist Willibald Pirkheimer. Especially among the humanists there were deserving men who at first favored, or at least maintained an indifferent attitude towards, the Wittenberg reform movement, such as John Fabri, who afterwards became bishop of Vienna, and John Faber, the Dominican prior of Augsburg, who later opposed the movement when it unmistakably revealed its true nature. Even Erasmus, much as he had favored Luther's procedure, joined the ranks of his determined opponents in 1524. Other intellectuals were misled in joining Luther by the semblance of reform proclaimed by him; and in the case of some, their allegiance to him was lasting and sincere, and in some instances fanatical. One of these literary men thus taken in was Hartmuth (Hartmann) von Kronberg, a knight who could not go far enough in his enthusiastic support of the Lutheran cause. Prompted by "piety," he petitioned the emperor to treat the pope "as an apostate and a heretic," if he refused to renounce his claims. In his religious enthusiasm Kronberg wished to see all ecclesiastical goods confiscated, and published a pamphlet in which he outlawed every Catholic priest who remained loyal to the ancient Church and stated that it was permissible to treat such "in much the same manner as one treats a ravening wolf, as spiritual thieves and murderers in word and deed." His Protestant biographer styles Kronberg a man of "unshakable character, though somewhat narrow-minded."⁶ Such types were naturally rare, but many showed a steadfast devotion to the cause of Luther, which they regarded as noble.

Of far greater influence upon the masses who joined the Reformation than the attractive force of the good or seemingly good features of the movement was the demand for the abolition of oppressive ecclesiastical burdens. The assertion that the commandments of the Church were not binding opened the door to apostasy. The abolition of confession, of the laws of fasting, of the ruling hierarchy, and the assertion of the dissolubility of matrimony—these and all the other gifts of the new Evangel to the free Christian was sure to captivate many. Above all else, the easy doctrine of justification by faith alone was sure to meet with a friendly reception.

George Witzel (Wicel), who was a Lutheran for a while, wrote

⁶ Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 325 sqq.

subsequently: "Oh, what a grand doctrine that was, not to be obliged to confess any more, nor to pray, nor to fast, nor to make offerings, nor to give alms. With these you ought surely to have been able to catch two German lands, not one only with such a bait. . . ." ⁷

Many clerics who had grown weary of the duties of their state, and desired to marry, flocked to Luther's banner. Convents and monasteries opened their portals and monks and nuns who had selected the monastic life without a vocation or who, enticed by the pleasures of the world, had become disgusted with their vows, left the sacred precincts and doffed their habits. The number of clerics who, prompted by worldly motives, joined the new religion and came to Wittenberg to receive appointments as preachers, was so great that Luther exclaimed: "Who can deliver us from these hordes?" The example of the married Wittenberg leaders proved exceedingly enticing. The ranks of the priests who contracted marriage, as mentioned above, were augmented in 1522 by Dr. Justus Jonas and John Bugenhagen. The former, who had been forced upon the monastery of All Saints as provost and who, in his capacity of professor of theology, proved to be one of the most distinguished assistants of Luther, contracted a solemn marriage with a woman of Wittenberg and defended his conduct in a book specifically directed against Faber's defense of celibacy. Bugenhagen, a Pomeranian, was likewise one of the first adherents of the new religion. He had been a priest and teacher of a convent-school at Treptow, and took up his residence at Wittenberg, where, in 1523, he was forcibly installed as pastor of the local church by Luther and the town council. He had married the previous year.

When Erasmus heard of the growing number of married priests, he penned the sarcastic words: "Many speak of the Lutheran affair as a tragedy; to me it appears rather as a comedy, for the movements always terminate in a wedding." ⁸

In the various departments of public life the word "liberty" produced favorable results in behalf of the Lutheran apostasy. In many places where the municipal authorities were engaged in a struggle with the territorial jurisdictions of the episcopate, joining the new religion or the threat of apostasy became a slogan in the battle for civil rights.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 313 sq.

⁸ Letter of March 21, 1528, on the occasion of the marriage of the monk Oecolampadius. Cf. Theod. Wiedemann, *Job. Eck*, p. 246.

The temptation to obtain high office and to appropriate the property of the Church was too strong to be resisted. The desire to obtain relief from economic pressure through the adoption of the new religion penetrated even to the peasants. In many places the rural populace, like the inhabitants of the cities, were affected by the mighty agitation which was conducted by means of the spoken and the printed word on behalf of the new ideas. Dissatisfied clerics joined in the agitation. It was a veritable mass suggestion. The indescribable power of Luther's pen, his forceful language, which was carried to the lowest classes of the population and excited all the instincts of opposition to the Church, actually induced a sort of popular hypnosis. The hero, such as every profound popular movement necessarily requires, was at hand. The evil conditions existing in State and Church furnished a fateful resonance to his voice. The apocalyptic expressions which he employed, supported by drastic wood-cuts, verses and songs, impressed the imagination and powerfully affected the emotions. The seed he sowed found a soil which was all the more favorable as it had not as yet been overrun by any other literature or public agitation, but offered, as it were, a virginal susceptibility.

In addition to all this there was the resort to force—force on the part of the civil authority for the purpose of introducing the new system of religion and advocated by the theological leaders to be exerted upon all who were exposed to their pressure and violence. The conduct of the civil authorities, especially in the electorate of Saxony, will be discussed more fully in the sequel. These authorities imitated the agitators, Anabaptists and others, in the application of violence.

Luther's personal method of procedure was marked by forcible measures in certain places soon after his return from the Wartburg. In these places, as well as elsewhere, the forbearance and consideration which he had recommended yielded to violent disciplinary penalties, when it appeared to be to the advantage of the new Evangel.

He had, it is true, recommended to Gabriel Zwilling, his first preacher who labored in Altenburg, that he should "liberate the consciences of men solely by means of the Word." He said he had promised his sovereign (prudence had compelled him to do so) that his adherents would observe this rule.⁹ But when the loyal Augustinian

⁹ "You must refrain from innovations . . . I gave my word to the prince, etc." (See Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 314, 316 sqq.)

canons of Altenburg, who had for generations exercised the uncontested right of appointing the pastor of the local parish, denied the new preacher permission to take possession of their church, Luther addressed a letter to the city council, whose members favored him, and as a consequence the council claimed the right of nominating Zwilling to the position.

In this letter he maintained that aldermen existed not merely for the sake of temporal government, but were also obliged "by brotherly Christian love" to intervene in behalf of the Gospel. For the rest, everyone had the right to repel ravening wolves, such as the canons and their disturbing provost, who, ensnared by false doctrines, unjustly collected the ecclesiastical tithes, and relied on the councils of the Church, whereas the Scriptures did not empower a council, but "every individual Christian" to "judge doctrine and to recognize and avoid the wolves." The canons were told to "observe silence, or teach the new Gospel, or depart."

Violence was resorted to. With the consent of the Elector, Luther's friend Wenceslaus Link, of the Augustinian Order, was appointed to the position in dispute, in place of Zwilling, who was too indiscreet. This was in the summer of 1522. In February, 1523, Link resigned his position as vicar-general of the Augustinian congregation, chose a wife, and was "married" by Luther himself at Altenburg over the protest of the courageous canons, who, although sorely persecuted, remained in the city with the other faithful clergy and personnel of their Order.

In order to sketch the fate of Altenburg during the next few years—a fate which became typical—it should be mentioned that Link, in 1524, succeeded in having the municipal council forbid the Franciscans, who were very much beloved in that city, to celebrate Mass in public and to preach and hear confessions. At the same time the municipal council, in a written address to the Elector, declared that, according to the Old as well as the New Testament, rulers were not allowed to tolerate "idolatry." The bailiff was given a free hand. In August, 1525, Spalatin, after resigning his office of court-preacher upon the death of the Elector Frederick, took over Link's position in Altenburg and married Catherine Heidenreich on November 19. Luther had preceded him. It was an inevitable consequence of Spalatin's marriage that the canons of Altenburg declared his position and benefices forfeited. Serious conflicts resulted from this action in a

city already torn by religious dissensions. Luther demanded from John, the new Elector of Saxony, the suppression of Catholic worship at Altenburg, the "Altenburg idolatry," as he styled it, among other offensive invectives. Soon after Spalatin directed to the court a similar demand couched in no less offensive terms, followed by a second demand in January, 1526. It must be considered, he wrote, "that many a poor man would readily embrace the Gospel, if that miserable idolatry were abolished." At the most, the canons might be permitted "to conduct their ceremonies in the greatest secrecy, behind closed doors, without admitting any other person." On February 9, Luther, referring to Altenburg, memorialized the new Elector, who was very accommodating to him, along the following lines:

As a ruler he was bound in conscience "to attack the idolaters" and to suppress "the false, blasphemous cult" as much as possible. Did he wish to be responsible to God for the criminal abominations by supplying the foundation with tithes and property, as heretofore? Moreover, a secular ruler should not tolerate that contradictory preachers (*i. e.*, such whose teachings were at variance) lead his subjects into dissension and schism, whence rebellion and mutiny may ensue. "One and the same doctrine should be preached in the same locality." "For this reason," he added, "Nuremberg has silenced its monks and closed its monasteries."

By means of the deceptive principle of "one doctrine for the same locality" he rests his intolerance upon a plausible foundation which was satisfactory to the mediocre intelligence of the prince. The subversion of the whole political order in the electorate, as well as elsewhere, was thereby accelerated.

The solution of the Altenburg problem was thus made dependent upon the conscience of the somewhat pietistic ruler. Should the canons, says Luther, attempt "to apply their own conscience," "it shall avail them naught" because they cannot prove their position from Scripture! And if they should complain that "they are forced to embrace a certain doctrine, that is not true; they are only forbidden to give public scandal." They are prevented from practicing a cult which they themselves "must confess is not founded in Scripture."

Such was the pitiful justification of that brutal use of force which became habitual afterwards. But the loyal Catholics at Altenburg offered determined resistance. When the Lutheran visitators

came to exercise their office, in 1528, the town council informed them that there were still "many papists in the city," yea, that the whole district "fairly swarmed with monks and nuns." It was an honorable testimony to Catholic loyalty, the like of which was also found in other places.

From the introduction of the new Evangel into Eilenburg, in 1522, we learn what was Luther's leading idea: "It is the duty of the sovereign, as a ruler and brother Christian, to drive away the wolves and to be solicitous for the welfare of his people."¹⁰ On the occasion of a first and second visit to Eilenburg, Luther had discovered that the magistrates of that place had failed to show the proper zeal. Like the authorities of many other places, they were desirous of increasing their own power and influence; but their Catholic conscience checked the majority of them. The prince was to remedy this defect by the exercise of his authority. With the aid of Spalatin, Luther at once proposed two new preachers for Eilenburg, of whom one was to be summoned by the town council under the influence of the court, whilst at the same time the afore-mentioned statement about the wolves was to be shown to the sovereign. Thus the matter was settled in a bureaucratic manner with the co-operation of the prince. Andrew Kauxdorf, a native of Torgau, was finally recognized by the magistrates as preacher, entered Eilenburg in 1522, and was permitted gradually to Lutheranize the people who refused to embrace the new religion.

Where the magistrates were unwilling, the powerful nobility, at Luther's instigation, frequently used violence to bring about a change.

Thus, to cite but one striking illustration, Count Johann Heinrich of Schwarzburg became the founder of Lutheranism in his territories in virtue of a decree authorized by Luther.¹¹ His father, Count Günther, who was loyal to the Church, had legally confirmed the monks at Schwarzburg in the possession of their parishes; now, Johann Heinrich asked Luther how he might deprive them of their rights and possessions in favor of a preacher of the new Evangel. Luther replied on December 12, 1522, that Count Günther had naturally expected the monks to preach the Gospel, but if witnesses could testify that they did not preach the true Gospel (of Luther), but papistical heresies, the Count would have the right, nay, the duty, to

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

oust them from their parishes. "For it is not unlawful," he says, "indeed, it is absolutely right to drive the wolf from the sheepfold. . . . A preacher is not given property and tithes in order that he should do injury, but that he should labor profitably. If he does not work to the advantage of the people, the endowments are his no longer." This principle was promptly applied at Schwarzburg. The Count seized the properties and revoked the privileges which his father had given to the Church. Monks and parishes were subjected to violence, and the new Evangel was introduced.

Luther's reply concerning temporal possessions, taken in connection with certain other statements made by him, reveals an idea truly revolutionary in its consequences. It indicated that, if the clergy refused to preach the new religion, in Germany and in the Church in general, ecclesiastical possessions were no longer secure. Lutheranism needed but to apply this principle, which, undoubtedly, it was strongly tempted to do. If only those priests, abbots, bishops, and other spiritual rulers were to continue in the possession of their benefices who used them to promote the Lutheran innovation, then the foundations of order were overturned. Wyclif and Hus had proclaimed similar doctrines, and the Christian State had been able to defend its legal structure against them only by taxing its energies to the utmost. It is hardly probable that Luther realized in advance all the consequences of his decision in the Schwarzburg affair, though practically it had been acted upon ever since the beginning of the new movement. Only prudent regard for the electoral court prevented the rigorous carrying out of this decision.

2. AUXILIARIES FROM THE MONASTERIES

Lichtenberg in the Saxon Electorate affords an example of how Lutheranism gained ground by enticing the occupants of important clerical positions to violate the vow of celibacy. The appeal to sensuality served as a stimulant. Whereas the measures discussed before were coercive, we have now to consider a kind of moral compulsion whose power over mortal man was fully realized by those who set the evil passions in motion. In this respect the letter by which Luther prepared the way for the change of religion in Lichtenberg is an extraordinary document. In that city there was a famous monastery of Antonine monks, who followed the rule of St. Augustine. It was

governed by Wolfgang Reissenbusch, a doctor of laws and a former student of the University of Wittenberg. He was bound to his Order by solemn vows, and discharged the office of "preceptor" of the monastery and administrator of its property. Luther's friends reminded him that Reissenbusch, notwithstanding his scruples, could probably be prevailed upon to marry—a matter which he had already discussed with him. Luther sent him an open letter, which was published at Wittenberg under the title: "A Christian Letter Addressed to Wolfgang Reissenbusch," etc. In it he tries to impress the recipient, as well as all others who are similarly situated, with every conceivable reason to induce them to violate their vow of chastity by an immediate marriage.

As a man, he says, Reissenbusch was "created for and compelled by God Himself to embrace the married state." The monastic vow is void because it demands the impossible. To keep chastity is "as little within our power as to work miracles." As long as one is neither an angel nor a spirit, we are told, "God in no wise bestows or grants this privilege." He who takes such a vow relies "upon works, and not upon the grace of God;" he "takes his stand upon works and commandments" and denies "Christ and the faith."

Then follows a detailed, and, in some places, disgusting exposition of the alleged inevitable necessity of sexual intercourse. The non-satisfaction of the sexual instinct in matrimony had resulted in immorality among the entire clergy and in all the monasteries. Luther overwhelms his tempted friend in sinister language and with a demoniacal style intended to excite the passions. "It is necessary that you be urged thereto, that you be exhorted, driven, incited, and encouraged. Well now! dear sir, I prithee, why do you wish to delay and meditate, etc.? It must not, it ought not, and it will not be otherwise. Banish the thoughts from your mind and go ahead joyously!" True he would thereby become a "matrimonial mantle covering the disgrace" for others; but Christ, too, had become "the mantle that cloaks the disgrace of us all."¹²

The reference to Christ is repulsive. That holy name ought rather to have reminded him of the admonitions of Christ and His disciples, which were the very antithesis of his own exhortations. It should have recalled to him the words which served as a guiding star throughout all the centuries for those who voluntarily bound themselves by a vow of chastity. It should also have reminded him of the grace of Christ in which he who

¹² Weimar ed., Vol. XVIII, pp. 270-279; Erlangen ed., LIII, pp. 286 sqq. (*Briefwechsel*, V, p. 145), letter of March 27, 1525. Finally Luther says (*ibid.*): "It is but a matter of a brief hour of disgrace, to be followed by years of honor."

makes this sacrifice places his sole reliance and whereby that which appears impossible to the world is rendered easy and a source of joy. In lieu of these, we have alluring descriptions of the irresistible force of the sexual instinct.

Reissenbusch yielded to Luther's persuasion, bade farewell to the Order to which he had bound himself by a solemn vow, and married Hanna Herzog, the daughter of a poor tailor's widow at Torgau. With the connivance of the Elector he retained his clerical office as "preceptor" and the endowments entrusted to his Order. For the purpose of inviting others to imitate his example, the incident was exploited in the press by Bugenhagen, the Lutheran pastor of Wittenberg, who addressed to the happy groom an "Epistola Gratulatoria de Coniugio Episcoporum et Diaconorum" which he also caused to be published in German. Such great importance was attached at Wittenberg to the marriage of priests and monks as an auxiliary factor in the extension of the new Evangel.

Already at a previous stage of his career Luther had approached, among others, the Order of Teutonic Knights, urging its members to break their vows by marrying. Unfortunately, discipline had declined among these Knights, so that he had reason to hope that they would respond to his public invitation. Like the priests of this Order, the knights, too, were bound by a voluntary vow of chastity. Their contact with the world exposed them to special danger. The general reform by means of which Adrian VI endeavored to check the decline of their monastic discipline, proved to be but partially adequate in view of the dissensions that prevailed among the rulers of the Teutonic Order, especially since the Grand Master of the Order, Albrecht von Brandenburg, a cousin of the Elector Frederick of Saxony, was himself favorably inclined towards Lutheranism. After receiving a visit from the Grand Master at Wittenberg, on November 29, 1523, Luther wrote his "Exhortation to the Knights of the Teutonic Order to Avoid False Chastity and Embrace Lawful Matrimonial Chastity," which was at once published in German.¹³

In this work, the author depicts matrimony in alluring colors, as the proper thing for their state. He tells the knights who had secret and illicit relations with women, "not to despair in weakness and sin," because such extra-matrimonial relations were "less sinful" than to "take a lawful wife"

¹³ Weimar ed., Vol. XII, pp. 232 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXIX, pp. 16 sqq. Grisar, *Luther*, II, 116 sq., 317 sq.

with the consent of a council of the Church, supposing such a permission were given.¹⁴

In conclusion he says that Christ had reserved to Himself certain bishops who would resign from their office or transform it into a genuinely episcopal office for the sake of the Gospel. Many a bishop or abbot would marry, he says with a significant hint to weak ecclesiastical dignitaries, if the path were only blazed for them and wooing were no longer regarded as a disgrace and a danger.

These alluring appeals did not fail to attain their object in the case of those members of monastic orders to whom they were addressed. With the same energy Luther set about the task of winning over the episcopate, ridiculing the bishops who refused to heed him. When, in compliance with an imperial mandate, the bishops of Meissen and Merseburg proceeded with their visitations and called to account the clerics who had married, he issued a tract in which he gave full vent to his irritation against the hierarchy (1522). His main intention was to brand the higher clergy as immoral and to strengthen his appeals to the lower clergy to marry and preach the pure Gospel. This tract bore the title: "Against the Falsely Named Clerical State of the Pope and the Bishops."¹⁵ In this work he calls himself an "evangelist by the grace of God," declaring he had the same right to style himself thus as they have to call themselves bishops, since he was certain that Christ regarded him as such and would testify in his behalf on the day of judgment.

Here, too, he teaches that the sexual impulse can be controlled in the clerical state as little as fire can be deprived of its power to burn; that it is either "all fornication" or "impure, involuntary, miserable, lost chastity." There is "scarcely one among a thousand who lives an upright life." These few are "God's special miracles." Pope and bishops permit innocent men to be sacrificed "to Moloch, the fiery idol." "Monasteries and convents are gates of hell, where the faith (*i. e.*, his faith) is not practiced with honesty and vigor."¹⁶ He does not tire of censuring them because of their corrupt life.

But, he interposes, will not a revolt be the final outcome of his attitude against the episcopate? What about it? "It would be better"—thus runs his terrible reply—"that all the bishops were murdered, that all the monasteries

¹⁴ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 120.

¹⁵ Weimar ed., Vol. X, pp. 105 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXVIII, pp. 141 sqq.

¹⁶ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. I.

and convents were uprooted, than that a single soul should perish. Of what use are they but to live voluptuously by the sweat and toil of others?"¹⁷ As an ecclesiast by divine right he boldly issues "Doctor Luther's Bull and Reformation," which begins with the solemn declaration: "All who stake their lives, their property, and their honor, that the bishoprics are destroyed and the episcopal régime is exterminated, are dear children of God and true Christians, who observe God's commandments and combat the devil's régime. . . . All who sustain the rule of the bishops and are subject to them by voluntary obedience, are the devil's very own servants and militate against God's order and law." To this inflammatory appeal to violence, however, he appends the modifying clause that he does not wish to destroy with "club and sword," but, as "Daniel teaches (VIII, 25), the Antichrist shall be broken without hand, so that everyone, with God's Word, will talk, teach and stand firmly against the Antichrist, until he be confounded, abandoned, and despised, and come to grief of his own accord. That is a true Christian agitation for which one should stake his all."¹⁸

Besides the extirpation of the episcopate, Luther had at heart particularly the emancipation of the nuns. Soon after his Wartburg days, he dedicated two tracts to the "pious children" among the nuns, who were desirous of hearing the voice of the Gospel. One of these, published in April, 1523, bears the title: "Reason and Reply, why Virgins may leave Convents with Divine Sanction." The other is entitled: "Story of How God Aided a Nun." In contrast with the preceding appeal to agitate, the latter reads almost like an idyl. It was intended to inspire other nuns to leave their convents.

The occasion of the former publication¹⁹ was furnished by twelve Cistercian nuns, who fled from their convent at Nimbschen near Grimma, with the assistance of a town-councilor, Leonard Koppe of Torgau. Nine of these fugitive nuns came to Wittenberg. Among them were Catherine von Bora and a sister of Johann von Staupitz. According to Luther, this pamphlet was written expressly to illustrate how all nuns should liberate their consciences and save their souls. To the objection that such clandestine flight, combined with a denial of the monastic vow, gives rise to scandal, he replies: "Away with scandal! Necessity knows no law and gives no scandal. . . .

¹⁷ Köstlin-Kawerau, *M. Luther*, Vol. I, p. 517.

¹⁸ For contrary utterances, see Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 44 sqq. Likewise Grisar, *Lutherstudien*, VI (*Kampfbilder*, Grisar and Heege, Heft IV), pp. 126 sq., and especially pp. 137 sqq.

¹⁹ Weimar ed., Vol. XI, pp. 394 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXIX, pp. 33 sqq.

I should consult my soul; let the whole world be scandalized!" It is interesting to note Luther's confession that he had himself, with the aid of Koppe, planned the escape of the twelve nuns, who had been enlightened by his writings. They were mostly daughters of the nobility, who had been committed to the convent according to custom and hence failed to honor the state of life which they had embraced voluntarily. Their lodging with relatives or families in Wittenberg was a source of no small anxiety to Luther, since he feared that opportunities of marrying them off might not present themselves so readily.²⁰

After several weeks, three more nuns were abducted from the convent of Nimbschen by their families. Simultaneously sixteen escaped from the convent at Widerstett in Mansfeld, of whom five found lodging with Count Albrecht of Mansfeld, who was very friendly to the Lutheran cause.

The heroine of Luther's "Story of How God Came to the Aid of a Nun" was Florentina of Oberweimar, who had abandoned her convent at Neu-Helfta, near Eisleben.²¹ She told Luther of alleged bodily torments inflicted upon her because of her religious views. Luther willingly believed her story and immortalized her in a publication which he addressed to Count Albrecht of Mansfeld as a "sign in confirmation of the Gospel"—which sign one may not overlook with indifference.²² In compliance with the rule of her Order, Florentina had completed her year of probation and taken the vows. Having imbibed other ideas from the writings of the reformers, she was subjected to penalties by her superioress and kept in strict custody. But behold, O miracle, one happy day in February, 1524, "the person who should have locked her up, left her cell open" and she escaped! "God's word and work," Luther writes in all seriousness, "must be acknowledged with fear; nor may His signs and wonders be cast to the winds." Ordinarily, he adds, such "miraculous signs from God" are not properly heeded!

The birth of a deformed calf at Freiberg (Saxony) towards the close of 1522 was regarded by Luther as a miracle wrought by God in

²⁰ Amsdorf offers his assistance in procuring husbands for them; thus he offers the sister of Staupitz to Spalatin, adding: "But if you wish for a younger one, you shall have your choice of the prettiest." (*Grisar, Luther*, Vol. II, p. 137.)

²¹ Weimar ed., Vol. XV, pp. 86 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXIX, pp. 102 sqq. (year 1524.)

²² Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 159 sq.

condemnation of the monastic life.²³ He found that this monstrosity really represented a cowled monk in the act of preaching—an evident symbol of the divine wrath against the religious state. He published his discovery in a treatise entitled, "Interpretation etc. of the Monk-Calf of Freiberg."²⁴ The work was composed in a quasi-mystical style. The age was very superstitious about monstrosities, but Luther's pamphlet was unprecedented. In view of this literary product, one would like to wish, in the name of German literature, that the interpretation had been intended to be facetious. In reality an attempt has been made on the part of Protestants to explain the pamphlet as a huge joke. But a careful perusal of it completely destroys this hypothesis. The work on the monstrosity of Freiberg is itself a monstrosity. A terrible seriousness breathes from these prophetic, hyper-spiritualistic pages. The author quotes Sacred Scripture to show that his interpretation is "adequately founded" on the word of God. He intimates that perhaps the portent signalizes the day of judgment, "since many portents have succeeded one another of late." In exhibiting to his readers a distorted illustration of the deformed calf, he hypercritically undertakes to apply the details of this miraculous phenomenon to monasticism. The supposed cowl represents the worship which the monks render to the calf, *i. e.*, "the false idol in their lying hearts." The cowl over the hind-quarters is torn, this signifies the impurity of the monks; the legs are their "impudent doctors"; the monster is blind because they are blind; its ears are grotesque because of the abuse of the confessional; the tightening of the cowl around the neck signifies their obstinacy; the crippled horns indicate God's intention of breaking the power of monasticism; above all, the attitude of the calf is that of a preacher, which means that the preaching of the monks is despicable in the eyes of God.

Melanchthon prefaces the story of Luther's "Monk-Calf" by another treatise, namely, his own interpretation of the "Pope-Ass of Rome," a semi-legendary freak supposed to have been discovered in the Tiber in 1496.²⁵ The learned humanist was even more absorbed in the mystical world of such portents, than Luther. The latter

²³ Relative to the following, cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 149 sqq., and *Lutherstudien*, V (*Kampfbilder*, n. III), pp. 14 sqq., with two illustrations.

²⁴ Printed with Melanchthon's dissertation on the "pope-ass" in the Weimar ed. of Luther's writings, Vol. XI, pp. 369 sqq.; in the Erlangen ed., Vol. XXIX, pp. 7 sqq.

²⁵ Grisar, *Lutherstudien*, n. V (*Kampfbilder*, n. III), pp. 1 sqq., with two illustrations.

subsequently approved of and praised the first part of their joint production, in his "Amen to the Interpretation of the Pope-Ass."

"The sublime divine Wisdom itself," he said, "created this hideous, shocking, and horrible image." . . . "Well may the whole world be affrighted and tremble." "God manifests Himself openly in this abomination; great indeed is the wrath impending over the papacy."

"The multitude of signs," which Luther beheld and interpreted, presaged "something greater than reason can imagine," to quote the words of his *Kirchenpostille*.²⁶

Both works, that on the "Monk-Calf" and that on the "Pope-Ass," enjoyed the widest circulation, both jointly and separately, in repeated German editions and in translations into foreign languages. The illustrations were circulated as leaflets in order to gain adherents to the Lutheran cause. The "Pope-Ass" constituted a permanent fixture in Luther's polemical vocabulary. As late as 1545, the picture was selected by him for inclusion in his collection of "Illustrations of the Papacy."

The lively conviction with which Luther treated similar portents, in which "God openly manifests Himself," constitutes in some measure an excuse for his conduct. The manner in which he labored to promote opposition to the Church after his return from the Wartburg, reveals a misguided combative spirit, inspired by design, acrimony, hatred, and other reprehensible motives. At the same time, the great power of his own prejudices must always be taken into consideration. His excited state of mind did not permit him to measure his steps with sufficient clearness. His eschatological notions, as revealed by his writings on the monsters just mentioned, limited his intellectual outlook.²⁷

We must always remember that the historical portrait of Luther is not devoid of favorable traits, even at the time of his severest polemical strain after his sojourn at the Wartburg. There is, in the first place, his external manner of life. He is remarkably unconcerned about his dangerous status of one declared an outlaw by the empire and is satisfied with the very modest circumstances in his decaying monastery, which was hardly able to provide him with food and

²⁶ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 150.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 153 sqq.; Vol. V, pp. 241 sqq.; Vol. VI, pp. 141 sqq.

lodging. He is always ready to advise his friends, even though he is overwhelmed with letters. He attracts students to himself by his winsome and unassuming ways. In his sermons he preaches a sound morality, often with forceful emphasis and great ardor, always with marvelous clearness, plastic metaphors, and directness of speech. Abandoning the field of controversy for that of practical religion, he publishes popular works, such as his prayer-book, which, as he says, was intended to "propose a simple Christian form and mirror," to help the faithful to "recognize sins and to pray."²⁸ This is true of many other printed sermons on Biblical subjects, on the commandments, on faith, on the Our Father and the Hail Mary.²⁹ Even more important was the continued labor devoted to his translation of the Old Testament, of which portions appeared from time to time.

Did he still remain a monk in his exterior appearance? Dantiscus reports that Luther, when he visited him in 1523, no longer wore the Augustinian habit at home. He wore it when he preached, however, until October, 1524, when it was quite threadbare, and then exchanged it for a civilian coat, the cloth for which was presented to him by the Elector.

3. THE MOVEMENT WITHIN THE EMPIRE

After his return to Wittenberg, Luther, as we have seen, labored almost as zealously in behalf of his new religion, as if no measures had been taken against him at Worms. Notwithstanding the imperial ban, his activities were but little restricted. There had been no effective prohibition of his books, no determined prevention of the sending of preachers and the seizure of parishes, no lack of freedom for his personal movements, at least not within the confines of electoral Saxony. What particularly aided his cause was the fact that the Emperor's attention had been almost completely diverted from Germany immediately after the diet of Worms. The long war with Francis I of France occupied all of his time. Henceforth, the forces prepared to offer resistance to Luther—and of these the rulers of the empire had an adequate number at their command—lacked a rallying point and competent leaders. The so-called "imperial

²⁸ Köstlin-Kawerau, *M. Luther*, Vol. I, p. 574.

²⁹ Kawerau, *Luthers Schriften*, n. 178, 216, 242, 265, and *Kirchenpostille*, n. 137, 163.

regimen" at Nuremberg was a cumbersome body and with its constant need of funds not adapted to evolve a uniform and effective policy against a prince of the reputation and political acumen of Frederick of Saxony, the protector of Luther, and against the impetuous methods of the theological tribune of Wittenberg, who had succeeded in arousing the masses. The mandatory formulas of the edict of Worms, with their medieval apparatus, may have seemed promising in the eyes of the young emperor, who was zealous in promoting the interests of the Church, and in those of the papal nuncio, Aleander. In reality, however, they had lost much of their former force in view of the changed conditions of the time.

The head of the imperial regimen at Nuremberg was the Emperor's brother, Ferdinand, a sincere Catholic, who acted as viceroy for the empire and was ably assisted in the affairs that pertained to the support of the ancient religion by the courageous Duke George of Saxony. Among the foreign ambassadors accredited to the government the Saxon councilor, John von Planitz, labored energetically and successfully to promote the pro-Lutheran and dilatory policy of his master, Frederick of Saxony. The severe measures which the government had originally adopted to enforce the edict of Worms, found no response, not even in Nuremberg itself. The opposing elements succeeded in protecting themselves by indicating the danger of a revolt on the part of the agitated masses. Above all they pointed out that the theological questions at issue had not as yet been definitively decided. The complaints of the Catholic members of the government against the oppressive financial measures of Rome likewise constituted an obstacle to decisive action.

During this dangerous state of suspense, Pope Leo X passed away, on December 1, 1521. His successor, the pious and scholarly Adrian VI, who had labored in opposition to the ecclesiastical revolution as a professor at Louvain and as cardinal-archbishop of Tortosa, conceived the noble plan of mastering the hostile movement in Germany by means of a thorough reform within the Church, and by openly acknowledging that the curia and the clergy had a share in the guilt. He sent Chieregati as nuncio to the imperial diet which assembled at Nuremberg in the fall of 1522, and commissioned him to deliver a celebrated address on the necessity of a reform of Rome and the entire hierarchy and clergy, which has become a unique document of his unselfish, profound, honest, and candid character. In the strained

relations of the time, however, it failed to produce any results.³⁰ The efforts which he made during his short pontificate of twenty months towards ameliorating conditions in Rome were destined to fail in a great measure, due to the opposition of worldly-minded priests and prelates. It required time to achieve the necessary reforms. This high-minded pope, the last of German race, saw his fondest hopes shattered and was carried off all too prematurely by death.

Chieregati's demand that the edict of Worms be executed, was turned down by the imperial diet for the reason that it might provoke civil war. In lieu thereof, the estates demanded a church council, which was to be convoked within one year on German soil, for the purpose of allaying the current controversies. In the meantime the Gospel was to be preached "in conformity with the right Christian understanding." Luther could content himself with this resolution. Under somewhat more favorable auspices, a new diet was opened at Nuremberg in January, 1524.

The new pope, Clement VII (1523-1534), who, as Cardinal Julius de' Medici, had led an irreproachable life, made every possible effort to suppress the religious innovations by enforcing the decrees of Worms. As a result of the activities of his excellent nuncio, Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio, the majority of the delegates at the diet acknowledged the legality of the edict of Worms and declared their willingness to enforce it "as far as possible." A minority, consisting mainly of representatives of the cities, in which the reform movement was stronger, declared that the execution of the edict of Worms was simply impossible and repeated the misguided demand for a "free ecumenical council," to be held in Germany. This was accompanied by the still more misleading demand, in the form of a resolution adopted by the assembly, for the convocation of a national synod at Spires in the autumn, which was temporarily to restore order. Campeggio at once declared the latter resolution to be the beginning of an "eternal schism." The Pope repudiated it most energetically, and the Emperor in forceful language prohibited the undertaking and demanded the enforcement of the edict.

³⁰ Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste*, Vol. IV, Part 2, pp. 89 sqq. In his address, Chieregati read his instructions, which, according to Pastor, are "a document unique in the history of the papacy." "We freely confess," the document states, "that God permits this persecution of His Church because of the sins of men, particularly those of the priests and prelates. . . . All these evils have perhaps originated with the Roman curia," etc. (Pastor, p. 93).

Luther now resumed the fight against the edict of Worms. He reprinted it with a furious commentary, bearing the title: "Two Discordant Imperial Commandments concerning Luther."³¹ He confronted it with the resolution of the diet of Nuremberg in 1524. In it he incites the Germans by appealing to them to consider how, after all, they were "compelled to be the asses and martyrs of the pope, even if they had to be pulverized in a mortar." In heroic words he tells the princes of his willingness to die: "What, is not Luther's life so highly esteemed before God, that, if he died, not one of you would be certain of your life or rule, and his death would be a misfortune for you all? There is no jesting with God." So certain was he of his spiritual mission.

At the instigation of Campeggio, the Catholic princes now adopted practical measures by forming a defensive alliance against Luther and his passionate threats of a revolution, which, in his opinion, could be stemmed by him alone. The idea of an alliance was in the air. Towards the end of June, 1524, Ferdinand with the Bavarian dukes and most of the bishops of Southern Germany founded at Ratisbon a union for the protection of the Catholic religion, the extermination of heresy, and the solidification of the Empire. It was a necessity forced upon them by the dimensions which the religious revolt had assumed and by the dangers which threatened the State. The destruction of German unity was not begun at this time, as Protestant historians maintain; rather, the subsequent decline of unity was caused by the division that had preceded this union and by the religious schism which was accomplished by political measures. The Emperor welcomed the alliance of Ratisbon. It was welcomed still more cordially by Pope Clement because of the hopes it engendered of restraining the religious defection. For the time being, however, the Pope's efforts to extend the alliance of the princes into Northern Germany proved futile.

Among those who inspired the least hope of energetic resistance to the innovation, was the archbishop and elector of Mayence, Albrecht of Brandenburg. This man, who adhered to a frivolous philosophy of life and was known for his loose morals, maintained distinguished Lutherans such as Wolfgang Capito at his court. Luther, who knew that he could depend on him, dared to write to

³¹ Weimar ed., Vol. XV, p. 254. Erl. ed., Vol. XXIV, 2nd ed., p. 220.

the Archbishop on December 1, 1521, saying that he must not molest the priests who had married and abolish the practice of indulgences in the city of Halle; he added that he expected a reply within fourteen days, and if it were not forthcoming, he would publish his work "Against the Idol of Halle," which he had completed, but never printed.³² After three weeks, on December 31, Luther received a reply in which the Archbishop addresses him as "Dear Doctor" and states that he had received his letter graciously, that the indulgence at Halle had been discontinued, that he intended to be "a pious, religious and Christian ruler," and, finally, that he purposed "to be favorable and friendly" towards Luther "for the sake of Christ."³³ Luther now waxed more hopeful. But since he was disappointed in his principal expectation, namely, that the Archbishop would marry and convert his spiritual fief into a secular state, he launched a personal attack upon him, in a letter dated June 2, 1525. He positively demanded that the Archbishop "enter the state of matrimony and transform his bishopric into a secular principality." He also stated that the spiritual order was doomed to destruction beyond recovery, and if God did not perform a miracle, it is "terrible if a man were to die without a wife," since God had created him a male. At that time he was about to marry Catherine Bora. Shortly afterwards this letter to Albrecht was printed for the benefit of other spiritual princes of the Empire.³⁴ A kind fate preserved Albrecht from adopting the proposal of Luther, who directed new outbursts of ill-will against the Archbishop on several later occasions.

In the letter which Luther wrote to Albrecht of Brandenburg, he referred to the general degradation of the clergy manifested by "various songs, sayings, satires," and by the fact that priests and monks were cartooned on walls, placards, and lastly on playing cards. This systematic defamation was common particularly in electoral Saxony, during the reign of Frederick, the protector of the "Reformation," who knowingly permitted the attacks upon Catholicism to increase in every department of life. The deception and duplicity which he practiced casts a dark shadow upon his character and places his customary surname, "the Wise," in a peculiar light.

³² Erl. ed., Vol. LIII, p. 95 (*Briefwechsel*, III, p. 251).

³³ *Briefwechsel*, III, p. 265.

³⁴ Erl. ed., Vol. LIII, p. 308 (*Briefwechsel*, V, p. 186).

Up to his death, on May 5, 1525, Frederick practiced double-dealing in religious matters. He never married, but had two sons and a daughter by a certain Anna Weller. He and Albrecht of Mayence were the two most esteemed and powerful German princes of the time, the one a spiritual primate, the other a prince in the temporal order, but neither of them distinguished by high moral qualities.

A few words must be added concerning the attitude of the Saxon Elector towards Catholicism in Wittenberg.

The support which Frederick gave to the religious innovation produced deterrent phenomena, particularly in the stormy fight which Luther waged against the remnants of the Mass at Wittenberg. Notwithstanding his former declaration of tolerance toward the "weak" and his statement regarding the avoidance of force, Luther's intervention against the celebration of the Mass on the part of the last Catholic priest at the electoral chapel and the monastery church became a tragedy of flagrant intolerance.³⁵ Already in 1522, the Elector, yielding to the pressure of Luther, abolished the customary solemn exposition of relics. On March 1, 1523, Luther invited the chapter to put an end once and for all to the celebration of the Mass, otherwise the capitularies would have to be disfellowshipped from the communion of the Church. In a second letter he seriously threatened to discontinue his prayers for them, which might cause unpleasant consequences before God! A romantic self-deception regarding his influence in Heaven! When the Elector still hesitated to give his consent and warned against disturbances, Luther appealed to the people in a sermon in which he advised them not to lay violent hands on the canons, and stated that the territorial lord had "no authority except in secular matters." A new, sharp letter of Luther to the cathedral canons provoked the censure of the Elector; but Luther knew he could go farther; he felt assured of the final approval of Frederick, and nothing in that letter was more correct than the warning issued to his enemies, that they were not certain of the protection of the Elector. A new sermon in which Luther fulminated against the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, was delivered on November 27, 1524. The princes and the authorities, he exclaimed, ought finally to force "the blasphemous servants of the Babylonian harlot" to stop the devilish practice of saying Mass. It was scarcely

³⁵ For the following cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 88 sqq., and especially pp. 327 sqq.; Vol. IV, pp. 506 sqq.

possible to restrain the people and the students from committing acts of violence. The town-council and the university threatened with the wrath of God the priests who still held out. Finally, Frederick "the Wise" abandoned them ignominiously to their fate. A vigorous word from him, reinforced by his guard, would have silenced the opponents, at least in the city.

The canons finally bowed to the raging elements. On Christmas, 1524, Mass was suspended for the first time, never to be resumed. Referring to the three remaining Catholic canons, Luther, in his characteristic fashion, said that "three swine and bellies" still remained in the church, "not of All Saints, but of all devils."

An echo of his violent sermons against the Sacrifice of the Mass was the tract, "On the Abomination of the Silent Mass, called the Canon," which he published in the beginning of the year 1525.³⁶ In it he attributes the merit for the deeds of violence perpetrated at Wittenberg to the "secular lords," who, he says, had been obliged to intervene.

In a letter written at the beginning of May, 1525, to the Elector Frederick, who was very ill at the time, Luther's friend Spalatin, Frederick's counselor and guide in the above-described fight on the Mass, unreservedly set forth the duties of secular rulers to promote a religious reformation.³⁷ This applied to all territorial rulers.

A few days later, on May 5, Frederick died in his castle at Lochau after receiving the Last Supper under both forms, as an adherent of Luther; he was the first German prince thus to pass away. Luther had been summoned to attend him in his last moments, but arrived too late. In fact, he had never met Frederick personally. On the tenth of May, and again on the eleventh, the day of the funeral, he delivered funeral orations in the castle-church, which abounded in exuberant eulogies of his friendly and prudent protector. In a consolatory letter addressed to John, the brother of the deceased, who succeeded him as ruler, he renewed his former, very intimate relations. John proved an even more determined protector than Frederick, and with his assistance Luther was able to exterminate Catholic worship in the electorate of Saxony.

As the Reformation was imposed in electoral Saxony by pressure

³⁶ Weimar ed., Vol. XVIII, pp. 22 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXIX, pp. 113 sqq.; Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, pp. 508 sqq.

³⁷ Köstlin-Kawerau, *M. Luther*, Vol. I, p. 724.

from above, so, too, in other German territories. The free imperial cities especially hastened to take the lead in the introduction of the new ecclesiastical régime by recourse to penal measures enforced by the civil authorities.

The tremendous development of the civil power at that time was very advantageous to the extension of the Protestant revolt. A number of practically independent principalities arose from the loose structure of the empire. Due to the long absence of the Emperor, the territorial rulers found themselves thrown upon their own resources. The increase of power which accrued to their scepters in virtue of the new religious system, accelerated their steps in the direction of absolutism.

As early as 1523, Luther had dedicated his treatise "On Secular Authority and the Extent of the Obedience due to it" to John, the heir-apparent to the throne of the Saxon Electorate.³⁸ It was a sermon which he had delivered in John's presence at Weimar and which was published at the latter's request, after having been enlarged by the author. Luther later on loved to appeal to this work, in order to show that it was he who had indicated the proper measures to the civil governments for emerging from the oppression of the papacy. "I would fain boast," he says of himself, "that, since the age of the Apostles, the secular sword and authority have never been described so clearly or praised so splendidly, as by me, as even my antagonists must acknowledge."³⁹ However, what good there is in this work had long ago been expounded by Catholic writers, e. g., the demonstration from Holy Writ that the secular power exercises its authority by the will and ordinance of God. Luther's exhortations to the princes in the third part are beautiful, but by no means new.

On the other hand, the new ideas contained in the second part of the treatise on the restriction of the civil power to temporal affairs, and to the punishment of evil-doers and the protection of good citizens were fallacious and contradicted the theories concerning the assistance to be furnished by temporal rulers for ecclesiastical purposes which he himself subsequently enunciated and openly applied. In the second part of the treatise he has in mind only Catholic princes, his intention being to oppose a strong barrier to their

³⁸ Weimar ed., Vol. XI, pp. 245 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXII, pp. 59 sqq.

³⁹ Köstlin-Kawerau, M. *Luther*, Vol. I, p. 584. Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 294 sqq.; IV, 331.

measures against Lutheranism and for the protection of the Catholic religion. Hence the assertion that secular princes have no voice in matters pertaining to religion. Hence, also, the separation in principle of the kingdom of God from the kingdom of the world, which he proposes. The world, he says, is a house of devils which requires the sword for its government. But the true Christian believer lives in a divine kingdom, which needs no laws and no compulsion, but is governed solely by the Word of God. These are hazy and extravagant ideas which led him to make such declarations as the following: a Christian must put up with any injustice committed against him by his fellowmen, and leave it to the authorities to protect him; for Christ in the Sermon on the Mount taught men to resist evil. In general, the Sermon on the Mount, with its passages referring to the blow on the cheek, etc., affords, to the mind of Luther, not only a guide to perfection; it supplies no mere "evangelical counsels," as the papists teach, but real commandments, which are known to and observed only by those who dwell in the kingdom of Christ, but not by those who inhabit the kingdom of the world and by the civil authorities.⁴⁰ Here he meets with a dilemma when he invests the prince with a dual personality which, on the one hand, fundamentally degrades him to the rank of a beadle and a "jailer" of the wicked, whilst, on the other, he must satisfy the most exaggerated religious demands as a Christian believer.

At that time Luther never imagined that he would soon be compelled to regard the civil rulers as the real protectors and guardians of religion in their respective territories, whose chief duty was to ward off the "wolves," *i. e.*, the "papistical" antagonists of the Reformation, and to eradicate the "sacrilegious" Mass.

4. THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

At the beginning of his revolt Luther entertained certain pseudomystical ideas of a freely operating system of congregations.⁴¹ He soon found it to be impossible to form an organization of those members of former parishes who had been aroused by the new Evangel—an organization which would be purely spiritual and reject

⁴⁰ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 298 sq. On Luther's distinction between the world and the Church see *ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 55 sqq.

⁴¹ For the following, see *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 102 sqq.

coercive measures, whether secular or ecclesiastical. Thus he was necessarily compelled to change his ideal from that of a congregational church to that of a popular church ruled by a spiritual authority under the protection of the State. Thence, by the intrinsic necessity of his new system, he arrived at the compulsory national Church and his original idea of an invisible Church became gradually obliterated.

Yet he always wished to have a separate church for those who truly believed in his Gospel, as distinct from a church which was open to all, even to those who thought in terms of paganism. Repeatedly he voices his longing for such a genuinely Christian church (*ecclesiola*) with a superintendent, ecclesiastical discipline, and the ban, subject, not to the State, but to himself. He admits, however, that he has not a sufficient number of people to join him in this project.⁴² Undoubtedly the execution of this plan would have resulted in two ambitious and mutually antagonistic groups of churches. In general, it is evident how instability and disintegration were the sole fruits of Luther's abandonment of the true concept of the Church. Some modern Protestant writers hold that Luther did not establish any church whatever. The separation of the State from the German Protestant ecclesiastical structure, which has taken place in our time, and the disappearance of the supreme episcopate of the Protestant State ruler, has placed this statement in a new light. There is need of reconstructing the church from the foundation up.

It is interesting to review the intended institution and ultimate fate of the congregational church originally planned by Luther.

It was to be a free covenant of brethren without binding laws. Those who had embraced the Gospel of Luther were to remain, without compulsion, under supreme representatives of a corporate body of their own selection, and to call themselves Christians (not Lutherans). They were to have their own Last Supper and their own dogmas. The free covenant was to be an organization for service only, with "unity of spirit," as Luther himself repeatedly says, and not unity "of place, persons, things or bodies."⁴³ He does not desire a sectarian body. "To create sects," he says, "is neither useful nor helpful." In his opinion, it was, moreover, unnecessary in order to unite into a Christian covenant prior to the proximate end of the world, the still

⁴² See *ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 133 sqq.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 107 sq.

faithful members of the papal empire of Antichrist—the pious who were “terrified in conscience.”

How is the representative of the brotherhood to be selected? Luther writes: “Those whose hearts have been moved by God” should band together and choose a “bishop,” *i. e.*, “a minister or pastor.” Even though the congregation number only six or ten persons, they will attract others, “who have not yet received the Word.” “They must not act of their own accord, but must allow themselves to be moved by God.” “It is quite certain that Christ acts through them.”⁴⁴

The first coherent statement of these ideas is to be found in a Latin treatise of 1523, which Luther addressed to the Ultraquists or Calixtines of Prague. He entertained vain hopes of winning over this party, which still obeyed the Catholic hierarchy. His instructions to them were also intended for Germany, and above all for Saxony. This explains why he had the Latin treatise published also in German.⁴⁵

About this time he purposed to establish a model congregation of free Christians constituted from among the masses, in Leisnig, a small town situated in the Saxon electorate.⁴⁶ He addressed a treatise to the adherents of the new Evangel in that town, the title of which is characteristic of the impracticability of his ideal. The tract was entitled: “Reasons and Scriptural Motives Demonstrating that a Christian Assembly or Congregation has the Right and the Power to pass on all Dogmas and to Summon, Install, and Depose Teachers.”⁴⁷ The document states that, according to the Scriptures, the universal priesthood of all Christian believers empowers every member of the congregation to exercise independent judgment in matters of faith. Every member may come forward and correct the erring preacher. St. Paul says: “If anything be revealed to another sitting, let the first hold his peace” (I Cor. XIV, 30, where he speaks of the charismata of the first Christians). A Christian congregation is one in which the pure Gospel is preached. It is presupposed, however, that this is the new Evangel which Luther has brought to light and with which all are in accord who speak the truth, since this doctrine “has been received from heaven.” The papists, so Luther writes to the inhabitants of Leisnig, “ought to yield to us and to hear our Word.”

Events at Leisnig, as everywhere else, failed to justify his sanguine expectations. There was doctrinal confusion and administrative dissension. When, in 1523, in his solicitude for this town, Luther issued an introduction to their new “fiscal regulations,” this beneficent measure came to naught.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 136 sqq.

⁴⁷ Weimar ed., Vol. XI, pp. 408 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXII, pp. 140 sqq.

⁴⁸ Weimar ed., Vol. XII, p. 11; Erl. ed., Vol. XXII, p. 105.

The town-council confiscated the properties and endowments of the church, but refused to co-operate in the establishment of a common poor-box. Luther's appeal to the Elector for aid was futile. Nothing more is reported concerning the development of the religious life of the congregation in the town of Leisnig.

The fate of this ideal congregation was a great disappointment to Luther. But, as a Protestant investigator writes, "The primitive Lutheran ideal of a congregation forming itself in entire independence was nowhere realized. . . . Thus at an early date Lutheranism took its place among the political factors, and its development was to a certain extent dependent upon the tendencies and inclinations of the authorities, particularly of the ruling sovereigns of that time."⁴⁹

5. DIVINE SERVICE. MULTIFARIOUS ACTIVITIES

In 1523 Luther issued his treatise "On the Order of Divine Service in the Congregation," published in the interest of Leisnig and other expected churches of true believers. It was a provisional collection of counsels—not precepts, as he himself emphasizes—for the conduct of divine service.⁵⁰ The Word and the arousing of "faith" are, in his mind, the principal thing in public worship. He would have each congregation regulate these matters by its own authority after the model of the worship practiced in "the Apostolic age." There were to be daily assemblies, if not of the entire population, then at least of the clergymen and scholars, for the purpose of praying and reading the Bible.

Regarding the Mass, which was to be celebrated on Sunday in connection with the Last Supper, Luther, in 1523, issued a small Latin treatise entitled "Formula of the Mass and Communion for the Church in Wittenberg."⁵¹ According to this formula, the so-called Mass is not yet to be celebrated in German. The sequence of parts corresponds rather closely to the Catholic Latin Mass. Even the alb and the chasuble were to be worn by the celebrant in the Lutheran church of Wittenberg.

The Mass commenced with the Introit, Kyrie, Gloria, and an oration, followed by the Epistle with a chanted Graduale or Alleluja, and the Gospel.

⁴⁹ Walter Friedensburg, Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 333.

⁵⁰ Weimar ed., Vol. XII, pp. 35 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXII, p. 159.

⁵¹ Weimar ed., Vol. XII, pp. 205 sqq.; *Opp. Lat. Var.*, VII, pp. 1 sqq.

Relative to the traditional pericopes, Luther complained that they did not sufficiently inculcate the saving faith. The sermon was soon given the place of honor in the middle of the function, namely, after the Credo. In accordance with the "Formula," there was an abrupt transition to the Preface: for, since the sacrificial character of the Mass had been denied, the Offertory and the prayers that followed it were omitted. The ancient Canon was omitted, so that the Preface was immediately succeeded by the celebrant's chanting of the Biblical words of the institution of the Holy Eucharist (1 Cor. XI, 23-25). This chant was supposed to signify the consecration of the bread and wine for the Last Supper. Then followed the Sanctus and the Benedictus, the latter united with the Elevation. "For the sake of those weak in the faith," the Elevation was retained in the church at Wittenberg. The Pater Noster and the Pax Domini were succeeded by the communion of the celebrant, followed by the communion, under both species, of those among the faithful who had announced their intention of receiving, provided that such were present, and that they had stood the test of knowledge and worthiness which was demanded by Luther not long afterwards. The close of the Mass consisted of a selection of Catholic prayers after the Communion, the Benedicamus, and a benediction couched in a Biblical phrase.

The Mass, as thus described, was the first transition to the forms of worship still customary in the Lutheran churches. In course of time it was simplified and toned down even more, and, in view of Luther's constant emphasis on freedom, exhibited many local variations. As early as 1523 he had given it a German setting, which superseded the Latin language, through his work, "The German Mass and Order of Divine Service."⁵²

Already at an early stage complaints had been heard that divine service had become barren and ordinary, in consequence of the preponderance of the sermon, which often developed into a tedious polemical tirade against papism. The Catholic forms of worship, *per se* richer and more varied than Luther's borrowings from the ancient liturgy, were animated by the idea of the Eucharistic sacrifice. In the minds of Catholics the entire function was dominated by the idea of a *sacrifice* of infinite worth, offered by the Son of God through the consecrated hands of the priest—a sacrifice of which the most ancient ecclesiastical writers, such as Justin, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Irenaeus, speak with great reverence, professing the faith of which the Protes-

⁵² Weimar ed., Vol. XIX, pp. 72 sqq. Erl. ed., Vol. XXII, pp. 226 sqq.

tant theologian, Martin Chemnitz, admits that Christian antiquity "constantly expresses it with such nouns as *sacrificium, immolatio, oblatio, hostia, victima*, and such verbs as *offerre, sacrificare, immolare.*"⁵³ In the divine service devised by Luther, the heart which had formerly pulsated through the divine cult was missing; the whole thing had become a corpse, which even the popular religious hymns soon introduced, impressive though they were, failed to inspire with life.

Beginning with 1523, Luther devoted himself to the composition of liturgical and other hymns.⁵⁴ In this field he was very successful. His compositions are models of popularity and unadorned, natural force. They served to edify the people and became a mighty lever in the spread of Lutheranism. The aggressive mood is strongly marked in some of these hymns, as may be seen from the opening words of: "Behalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort, Und steur des Papst's und Türken Mord, Die Jesum, Deinen lieben Sohn, Stürmen wollen von Deinem Thron" (O keep us, Lord, true to Thy Word, stay the murders of the Pope and the Turks, who would assail Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ and cast Him from Thy throne). This song was written for the children, by whom "it was to be sung against the arch-enemies of Christ and His holy Church, the Pope and the Turks."⁵⁵ Luther's first poetical and political song was "Ein neues Lied wir heben an," commemorating the execution of two Dutch Lutherans at Brussels.

Luther supplied his followers with an ample collection of beautiful hymns, mostly adapted from the ancient Church, and highly esteemed many of the religious folk-songs of the German people, which embodied precious reminiscences of his youth. He is not, as used to be affirmed, the father of the German religious or ecclesiastical folk-song, since German songs had resounded both within and without the Church long before his day. Owing to his efforts, however, they flourished among his followers and in their churches became part of the divine service in lieu of the liturgical hymns of the ancient Church.⁵⁶ The first hymn-book intended for the use of the Lutheran churches was supplied by Johann Walther in

⁵³ *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, Vol. II, p. 782.

⁵⁴ Edited by Lucke in Vol. LIII of the Weimar edition of *Luthers Werke*.

⁵⁵ Grisar, *Lutherstudien*, Heft IV (*Luthers Trutzlied*), p. 47.

⁵⁶ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 546 sqq.

1524. It was entitled "Geistliches Gesangbüchlein" (Spiritual Hymn-book), and contained in five parts German hymns with appropriate melodies. Luther wrote the preface and the collection went out under his name. It comprised twenty-four hymns composed by himself and was subsequently augmented by twelve others from his pen. The hymn of defiance: "Ein' feste Burg" (A safe stronghold our God is still), which is regarded as the best of his poetical productions, was composed later, in 1527-28, during a strenuous period of interior and exterior stress.⁵⁷

Johann Walther supplied the melodies, which evidenced skill and good taste. They conformed, in part, to the traditions of Catholicism. It is not certain that Luther is the author of even a single melody, although up to the present time Protestant writers persist in glorifying him as a musical composer. A report concerning his alleged compositions made by a visitor at Wittenberg, who claims to have been a contemporary, is a late fabrication, both in this respect as well as in respect of the charge that Luther was a constant visitor at the tavern.⁵⁸

Among the manifold writings which Luther's industry produced in the years that have been reviewed so far, there is one which is entitled, "A Christian Admonition concerning Exterior Divine Worship,"⁵⁹ directed to his followers in Livonia. It illustrates the confusion in divine service which necessarily resulted from the religious changes and the liberty granted by Luther. The Lutheran congregations in Livonia were engaged in serious quarrels. In vain the voice of Wittenberg appealed to them: "Be united in regard to these exterior characteristics." Luther admonishes them against the introduction of a coercive discipline, which, he fears, would only lead to worse dissensions. "Who can resist the devil and his satellites?" "Where the divine Word penetrates, Satan must scatter his seeds out of sheer envy."⁶⁰

Naturally there was great discord and perplexity also in other places, not only in liturgical, but likewise in far more important matters.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 342 sqq.

⁵⁸ Grisar, *Ein unterschobener Bericht über Luther als Tonsetzer und Stammgast*, in the *Ehrengabe an Prinz Johann Georg von Sachsen*, ed. by F. Fessler, Freiburg, 1920, pp. 693 sqq.

⁵⁹ *Werke*, Weimar ed., Vol. XVIII, pp. 414 sqq.; Erlangen ed., Vol. LIII, p. 315.

⁶⁰ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 151 sq.

At Strasburg there was a profound schism, as is testified, among other things, by Luther's "Epistle to the Christians of Strasburg against the Spirit of Fanaticism," printed in 1524.⁶¹ Karlstadt, whose relations with Luther were strained because of his arbitrary ways, had been banished from Saxony by virtue of an electoral decree issued at the instigation of Luther, and commenced to agitate in Strasburg against images, mural paintings, vestments worn at Mass, and other "pagan" practices which he discovered there. He also propagated his denial of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and succeeded in surrounding himself with an active coterie of adherents. Zwingli exerted his influence upon the movement from Zurich. Capito and Bucer, at that time teachers of theology at Strasburg, were in agreement with Zwingli. Certain preachers at Strasburg wrote to Luther, asking him what should be their attitude towards the existing quarrels. Luther hastened to have his reply printed, since he feared that like schisms in other places would be caused by the "fanatics." In his mind all were fanatics who enthusiastically opposed the alleged externality of ceremonies, or who held independent views and were not devoted to his teaching, especially such men as Karlstadt and the "prophets of Zwickau," who believed that they were inspired from on high. Above all, he attributed a fanatical spirit to those teachers who did not advance along the same line with him relative to the doctrine of the Last Supper.

In his letter to the preachers of Strasburg he instructs the questioners to permit themselves to be guided, not by Karlstadt's inconstant prophetic notions, but solely by Christ, our Redeemer and Sanctifier, who imparts the correct precepts and for whom he (Luther) speaks.

In the matter of the Eucharist, Luther champions the literal interpretation of the words of Christ, "This is my body," and makes this remarkable confession: "Had someone told me five years ago that there was nothing but bread and wine in the Sacrament, he would have done me a great favor. I have suffered strong temptations, and have done violence to myself and writhed with pain, so that I would have been glad to be relieved, because I clearly perceived that I could thereby have administered a great blow to the papacy." He adds that the old Adam in him is even now only too much inclined to deny the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist; but the words, "This is my body," are too plain, and Karlstadt's buffoonery had confirmed him all the more in his adhesion to this simple, literal sense.

⁶¹ Weimar ed., Vol. XV, p. 391; Erl. ed., Vol. LIII, p. 270.

He was soon to become involved in a far greater controversy regarding this question with Karlstadt, and later with Zwingli.

Ulrich Zwingli, influenced by the writings of Luther and his own one-sidedly humanistic training, had devoted himself to "reformatory" ideas while yet a pastor at Einsiedeln. After his election as pastor of the grand minster of Zurich, towards the end of 1518, he intensified his devotion to these ideas. He had eulogized Luther as a beacon light of Christian theology, as the fearless hero of truth, as the man of the future. He was, however, very jealous of his own intellectual independence as against the preacher of Wittenberg. "I have not learned the doctrine of Christ from Luther," he stated in 1523, "but from the Word of God. If Luther preaches Christ, he does just what I do."⁶² After 1523, the example of the Wittenberg priests who embraced matrimony exerted its influence also upon the numerous adherents of Zwingli. As early as 1522, Zwingli himself had contracted a so-called "marriage of conscience" with Anna Reinhard, and, in April, 1524, he publicly led her to the altar in the minster church. He later admitted that he was at daggers drawn with his vow of celibacy in the days when he was still a Catholic priest,⁶³ and proclaimed the theory that the devil had introduced sacerdotal celibacy.

The grave controversy between Luther and Zwingli on the Eucharist, to be discussed in detail in the sequel, was occasioned by Zwingli's letter to Matthew Alber, a preacher of Reutlingen, dated November 16, 1524. In this letter he first developed his interpretation of the verb "is" in the text of the institution of the Eucharist in the sense of "signifies." According to his commentary of March, 1525, he does not even wish to raise the question of the corporal consumption of the Body of Christ.⁶⁴

In the meantime Luther published his principal attack upon Karlstadt's doctrine of the Eucharist as well as upon those who sympa-

⁶² Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 379 sq. Farner in *Zwingliana* (1918-19) abandons the old notion of Zwingli's self-sufficiency.—"The humanist person, to whom the Bible is a book on morals, arrives at a true understanding of the Gospel through the agency of Luther in 1519, and echoes his views." Bossert, in the *Theol. Literaturzeitung*, Vol. XIX, p. 206.

⁶³ See Walter Köhler, *Zwinglis Geisteswelt*, Gotha, 1920, pp. 22 and 31, quoting Zwingli's own confession in a letter to Henry Uttinger, December 3, 1518. (*Zwingli's Werke*, ed. by Egli et al., Vol. VII, pp. 110 sq.).

⁶⁴ Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, p. 409, n. 3.

thized with Karlstadt's ideas, in his large treatise "Against the Heavenly Prophets, on Images and the Sacrament." It is a work overflowing with indignation.⁶⁵

He shows that his former friend and colleague is guilty of harboring "a rebellious and murderous spirit." Karlstadt, he says, "openly declares that I am of no account." "If your spirit," thus he addresses Karlstadt and his friends, "had been the true spirit, he would have demonstrated his office with signs and words; but he is a murderous secret devil," whose diabolic nature follows from the fact that they do not know how to teach the principal subject-matter of theology, namely, how "to obtain a clear conscience and a joyful heart at peace with God. . . . They have never experienced it."⁶⁶

The fanatics, to whom Thomas Münzer and Valentine Ickelsamer belonged, in their repeated literary attacks upon Luther, had marshaled many effective arguments against him. The attitude of the so-called "Baptizers" was not as foolish in every respect as Luther represented it. Recent Protestant writers admire their modern rationalistic ideas. Luther was so sensitive to their many effective arguments against his arbitrary conduct that he expressed himself as follows in his book on the "Heavenly Prophets": "As if we did not know that reason is the devil's handmaid and does nothing but blaspheme and dishonor all that God says or does." When confronted with logical arguments he claims they are "mere devil's roguery."⁶⁷

Accordingly, he appeals to the Bible. This he does very effectively in the principal part of the book, where he demonstrates the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist against Karlstadt. He exhibits so much ingenuity and erudition in proof of his literal understanding of the verb "is" that even Catholic theologians may learn therefrom. However, he stops halfway, excludes transubstantiation, and holds that Christ is present simultaneously with the bread. If the anti-papistical Luther shines forth in this exhibition, he bids defiance still oftener to the fanatics, as, for instance, in the treatment of the elevation during Mass. Karlstadt denounced the adoration of the species during the elevation. Luther writes: "Although I too had intended to abolish the Elevation; yet I will not do so now, the better to defy and oppose the fanatical spirit."⁶⁸ In his "Clag etlicher Brüder" (Com-

⁶⁵ Weimar ed., Vol. XVIII, pp. 62 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXIX, pp. 134 sqq. Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 387, 390 sq.

⁶⁶ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, p. 398.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 395 sq.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

plaint of Several Brethren) Ickelsamer reproached him, not without justification, with producing many anti-Catholic dogmas merely out of spite, as he himself confesses, because the papists "had pressed him so hard," and not because of logical necessity or calm reasoning.

The "Complaint of Several Brethren," originating in Karlstadt's circle, and composed by Ickelsamer at Rothenburg on the Tauber, aside from many exaggerations and distortions, cast a glaring light upon Luther's doctrine and character.⁶⁹ This is true in an even greater degree of Thomas Münzer's "Apology against the Unspiritual, Luxurious Lump of Flesh at Wittenberg," which he composed in 1524.⁷⁰ The head of the Wittenberg school was regarded by the genuine Anabaptists, who claimed to be spiritual, as one who had gone astray and had been ensnared by the world and sensuality. Even if they went too far in their personal attacks, they were successful in proving that there was no evidence for Luther's divine mission, and that he had no right to condemn whatever ran counter to his opinion. They refused to credit him when, with characteristic self-assertiveness, he assured them, in his address to the preachers of Strasburg, that he had hitherto done right and well in the main. "Whosoever asserts the contrary," he thought, "cannot be a good spirit."⁷¹ They reproached him for his arbitrary treatment of a most important matter, namely, the interpretation of the Bible, maintaining that it was not the Bible which governed him, but the nonsense which they designated as "Bible, Bubble, Babble."⁷² From him they claimed to have learned to exercise freedom in searching the Scriptures, which they said they used with discretion. He forbade them to do so, whereas, independently of him, "the Gospel grants freedom of belief and the right of private judgment." "Now settle yourself comfortably in the papal chair," Ickelsamer tells him, "for after all you want to listen to your own singing."⁷³

The eccentric character of Thomas Münzer impelled him to advance farthest in his fanaticism for the Anabaptist system. Since Easter, 1523, this one-time Catholic priest ruled in Allstedt near Eisleben as preacher of the new religion, claiming to be guided by a higher spirit. It was his

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 170 sq., 302.

⁷⁰ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 364 sq.; Vol. III, p. 302; Vol. II, pp. 130 sq.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 397.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 365, 370 sq.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

object to exterminate the impious by the use of force and to establish a communistic kingdom, composed of all the good people on earth and modeled upon the supposed ideal of the Apostolic age. His readiness to apply violent measures was manifested by his destruction, with the aid of an excited mob, of a shrine at Malderbach near Eisleben. The spiritual and social revolution, which it was feared he would start, was proclaimed by him in a sermon published later.

It was during this state of affairs that Luther seized his mighty pen and in the last days of July, 1524, published his "Letter to the Rulers of Saxony on the Spirit of Revolt."⁷⁴ It was written against Münzer.

He demanded of the princes that they should "suppress disorder and prevent revolution." At the same time he tried to justify his own new religion in the eyes of the princes. He admits that he is "deficient in the spirit and hears no heavenly voices" like the fanatics, but asserts that his cause comes from God, whereas the devil speaks through Münzer. The fanatics, he says, attacked his conduct; they "take offense at our sickly life"; but all depends on doctrine, even if conduct has its shortcomings. "Let them but preach confidently and cheerfully," they will nevertheless succumb. He places his hopes for the true Gospel in the constancy of the Elector, and in that of his brother and son. He refers them incidentally and alluringly to the prospects of material gain, when, relative to former Catholic churches and monasteries, he writes: "Let the territorial lords dispose of them as they see fit."⁷⁵

In his ponderous reply to Luther's letter to the princes, which he entitled "An Apology" (*Schutzrede*), Münzer complained that Luther "exploded with fury and hatred like a real tyrant." He (Münzer) preached from the Bible only, but not, "please God, his own conceits." Luther having boasted of his courageous appearance before the diet of Worms, and of other feats, he terms him "Doctor Liar" and "Lying Luther." "That you appeared before the Empire at Worms at all was thanks to the German nobles whom you had cajoled and honeyed, for they fully expected that by your preaching you would obtain for them Bohemian gifts of monasteries and foundations, which you now promise to the princes."⁷⁶

The noisy criticism of the fanatics, who kept a sharp watch on

⁷⁴ Weimar ed., Vol. XV, pp. 210 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. LIII, pp. 255 sqq.

⁷⁵ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 365 sqq.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 367 sq.

their opponent, rendered Luther somewhat more cautious with regard to blemishes in his own life. Whatever I do, he says, is subjected to investigation; I am a spectacle to the world (*spectaculum mundi*; 1 Cor. iv, 9). He learned to moderate his appeal to the spirit, to the inner voice, and to personal experience, and to attach greater value to the so-called external word, *i. e.*, the teaching of Scripture as he interpreted it. What gave him an advantage over the fanatics was his practical common sense, which made him feel far superior to them.⁷⁷ He did not betray such foibles as they either in his concept of God and in his ideas of suffering and affliction, or in the establishment of ecclesiastical communions, or more particularly in his social ideas, even though his teaching in these matters was quite confused.

However, it must be emphasized that the fanatics took their departure precisely from Luther's so-called reform ideas. They went beyond him, partly by logically developing these ideas—a thing which Luther did not want—and partly as a result of arbitrary distortions and additions. At all events, the fanatics are true children of Luther; their dreams and revolutionary projects are fruits raised in his soil. It was a catastrophal punishment for him that he was compelled to fight practically all his life in order to dissociate the fanatics from his work. His rage increased with his resistance and was intensified by jealousy. They intend to invade my field of labor and fame, he declared in substance; they wish to wrest the leadership from me and to appropriate what I have been unable to achieve amid bitterness and distress. "They exploit our victory," he says, "and enjoy it, take wives and abate papal laws—results which they themselves did not obtain by fighting."⁷⁸

Luther was especially interested in retaining infant baptism which the fanatical Anabaptists strove to abolish. He obstinately insisted on the absurdity that an infant received Baptism together with the faith, even if reason were unable to comprehend this. In 1523, he published his "Little Book on Baptism done into German,"⁷⁹ in which he retains the old rite according to which the infant is thrice breathed upon and the priest pronounces the exorcism, places salt in the infant's mouth, touches his ear with spittle, and anoints him

⁷⁷ Cf. Karl Holl, *Luther*, 2nd and 3rd ed., (1923), pp. 450 sqq. on the views of Münzer.

⁷⁸ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 367 sqq.

⁷⁹ Weimar ed., Vol. XII, pp. 42 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXII, pp. 157 sq.

on chest and back with sacred chrism. Thus far did his policy of accommodation go at that time.

A movement against infant Baptism had set in in Switzerland in 1523. It was promoted by the social undercurrent of the adherents of the new religion and provided the Anabaptist sects in Germany with a strong impetus. Conrad Grebel, with the aid of his followers, denied the right of the clergy to levy tithes, demanded the execution of the priests, tried to introduce communism and to establish "congregations of the saints" wherever the laws of God were not observed. The semblance of rigorism and pietism was common to the Swiss and the German Anabaptists. In reality they favored a certain emancipation of the flesh and demanded that nuns be permitted to marry.

6. THE PEN AS LUTHER'S WEAPON OF CONTINUED ATTACK

Matrimony almost constantly engaged the attention of Martin Luther after he had divested it of the dignity of a Sacrament and placed it on a level with ordinary civil contracts. It was imperative to devise new regulations in order to avoid a serious decline of morality. At the same time, in the eyes of the scrupulous, the unaccustomed liberty of Christian believers in this department of life had to be justified.

In 1519, Luther published a sermon "On the Married State,"⁸⁰ which he had to reedit in a revised edition, because of loud complaints against unbecoming language. He had permitted himself to go too far in his expressions, though to some extent the transcriber may have been to blame. The new and revised edition bore the title "Of Married Life" and was published in 1522.⁸¹ In these pages, too, he treats of sexual intercourse with a strange freedom of language and in his accustomed fashion.⁸² He declares that well-nigh all the obstacles or inhibitions to marriage devised by the popes were to be "repudiated and condemned." He shakes the foundation of the indissolubility of the marriage bond by allowing separation and re-marriage in certain cases.

⁸⁰ Weimar ed., Vol. II, pp. 166 sqq.; IX, pp. 213 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XVI, 2nd ed., pp. 60 sqq.

⁸¹ Weimar ed., Vol. X, p. 11, pp. 275 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XVI, 2nd ed., pp. 510 sqq.

⁸² Cf., e.g., the coarse expressions quoted in Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 250 sqq.

This latter work contains a passage which has gained notoriety. Luther says that if the wife refuses to render the *debitum* without reason, the husband may use threatening language to this effect: "If you are unwilling, there is another who is; if the wife is unwilling, then let the maid come."⁸³ In case the wife persists in her refusal, "the marriage is dissolved," and the husband may "take an Esther to himself and let Vashti go, as King Assuerus did"; he should let his wife "go to the devil" and, with the consent of the authorities, contract a new marriage.

Because of such utterances, particularly the passage, "then let the maid come," Duke George of Saxony addressed indignant complaints to his representative in the diet, Dietrich von Werthern. The Catholic controversialists of the time often advert to it. Offense was taken not only at the elimination of the matrimonial tie, but naturally also at the implied permission of extra-matrimonial intercourse with the maid. The phrase, "if the wife is unwilling, then let the maid come," may possibly have been a proverbial phrase in usage among the uncouth peasant class, signifying intercourse outside of wedlock. Since, however, Luther otherwise always inveighs strongly and decisively against extra-conjugal intercourse, it may be that he did not intend this application of the brutal phrase, but merely gave free rein to his pen when he cited the expression.

Luther's work "Of Married Life," taken in connexion with his other writings and pronouncements, clearly reveals how widely he opened the door to the destruction of the conjugal tie. August Bebel justly observes: "With regard to marriage, he [Luther] develops astonishingly radical views."⁸⁴ To this category belongs Luther's work on "The Seventh Chapter of St. Paul to the Corinthians" (I, Chap. vii), published in the year 1523. In some passages this work is characterized by a license of language which approaches indecency.⁸⁵

In general, lack of restraint in speech is a prominent fault of Luther's, arising from his endeavor to employ the language of the common people, wherein he was assisted by his descent from the peasantry. It is not true that he found low pleasure in sexual matters. His uncouth expressions are hardly ever employed for the sake of exciting the sexual passion, even though Modesty must often veil her countenance. He fairly wallows in the mire of base bodily

⁸³ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, p. 253. On the occurrence of this expression prior to Luther, cf. the investigations of G. Buchwald in *Beiträge zur Sächsischen Kirchengeschichte*, 1915, n. 29, Leipzig, 1916.

⁸⁴ Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 241 sqq., and *infra*, Ch. XVIII, n. 2.

⁸⁵ Weimar ed., Vol. XII, pp. 92 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. LI, pp. 1 sqq.

functions, especially in his vigorous denunciation of his opponents. He liked to hurl the most vulgar filth into the faces of his enemies, after he had stirred it up with something akin to glee. He was excelled by no one in this respect either among his contemporaries or in the succeeding so-called age of frank utterance, yes, we may add, not even in the earlier centuries of the Middle Ages, which were not exactly noted for delicacy of speech. In this characteristic quality, he stands forth as a giant, even in his earlier writings, which are now under discussion. Later on, his dexterity increased in an astounding degree. The apologetical references of his defenders to the indelicate language of his age, therefore, are valid only in a very restricted measure. His contemporaries, his nearest friends even, are shocked at the filthy material which is at his disposal in his temperamental outbursts against his adversaries.⁸⁶

King Henry VIII, of England, who was well versed in theology, violently attacked Luther as a heretic in 1521, in his "Defense of the Seven Sacraments," for which the Pope conferred upon him the title of "Defender of the Catholic Faith." Luther's reply to Henry's book (1523) was published in both Latin and German.⁸⁷ It abounds in vulgar attacks upon the King. In this work he says he wishes once more "to uncover the infamy of the Roman harlot" and declares "the harlot-countenance" of the king is brazen because of his defense of the "purple harlot of Rome, the drunken mother of impurity."

This fool, he says among other things, this excrement of swine and asses, wishes to defile the crown of my heavenly King of glory with the filth of his body; but the dung must be cast upon him, who is nothing but a lying rascal and buffoon, a monstrosity of a fool.⁸⁸

With disgust the highly educated English chancellor, Thomas More, took cognizance of the filthy language in this and other Latin works of Luther. In a "Reply to Luther's Calumnies," which he published in 1523 under an assumed name, this eminent humanist wrote in a style which fortunately was not habitual with him: "[Luther] has nothing in his mouth but stench, filth and dung. These he scatters about him more abusively and obscenely

⁸⁶ See my *Luther*, references in the index, Vol. VI, v. "Abusive language," "Unseemliness of Luther's language."

⁸⁷ Weimar ed., Vol. X, II, pp. 180 sqq., 227 sq. *Opp. Lat. Var.*, XI, pp. 385 sqq., and Erl. ed., Vol. XXVIII, pp. 343 sqq.

⁸⁸ Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 152 sqq.

than ever did churl. . . . If he continues to cultivate this vituperative manner of speech and to talk of nothing else but cloaca, latrines and excrements, then may others do as they please; we shall turn our backs upon his filth and abandon him to his vile discharges.”⁸⁹

In this same work against King Henry VIII, Luther says: “Through me Christ has commenced His revelations concerning the abominations in the holy place.” “I am certain that I have my dogmas from heaven,” “but the devil tries to deceive me through Henry;” “God blinds the devil, that his mendacity is made manifest through me.” The King, he says, proves the truth of the saying that there are no greater fools than kings and princes.

One is compelled to ask, what demagogical effects such frenzied language was likely to produce in an agitated world, when the respect due to civil authority was trampled under foot even in such works of Luther as his treatise “On Secular Authority.”

Among the other polemical writings which Luther produced during these years mention should be made of his Latin work, “Against the Armed Man Cochlaeus,” whom he ridicules as a combative knight because of his report of their interview at Worms and his defense of the Sacraments.⁹⁰ Cochlaeus, himself an effective controversialist, replied in a work that bore a no less poignant title, “Against the Cowled Minotaur of Wittenberg,”⁹¹ in which he seriously but unsuccessfully applies to Luther the legend of the abortive calf of Freiberg, claiming that it condemned him.

In opposition to the canonization of Bishop Benno of Meissen, Luther, in 1524, wrote his sermon “Against the New Idol and Olden Devil about to be set up at Meissen.”⁹² By means of this outrageous sermon he intended to counteract the favorable influence which the Catholic cause was likely to derive from the imminent canonization of the venerable Bishop Benno and his elevation as patron saint of Saxony, a project which was promoted by Duke George.

Eager to increase his followers, Luther at that time also cast his eyes upon the Jews. He imagined that the Jews were inclined to favor him and could be attracted to his cause. What gain and glory if he should convert the people of Israel to the true Gospel! These ideas

⁸⁹ The Latin text in Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, p. 237, note 1. It concludes: “Capiemus re-
consilium . . . sic bacchantem cum suis merdis et stercoribus cacantem cacatumque re-
linquere.”

⁹⁰ Weimar ed., Vol. XI, pp. 295 sq.; *Opera Lat. Var.*, Vol. VII, pp. 44 sqq.

⁹¹ Köstlin-Kawerau, *M. Luther*, Vol. I, p. 644.

⁹² Weimar ed., Vol. XV, pp. 183 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXIV, 2nd ed., pp. 247 sqq. Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 123.

inspired his little treatise, "That Christ was Born a Jew."⁹³ In this work, published in 1523, he relies on the prophecies which foretell the conversion of the Jews at the end of the world. "God grant that the time is near at hand, as we hope." His desire to win over the Jews remained unrealized; his hatred of Judaism afterwards induced him to launch the most unheard-of attacks upon them.

In the midst of his fretful and many-sided labors he yet found leisure to write works on social questions. His small tract against usury, published in 1519, and his "Great Sermon" of 1520 on the same subject, were followed, in 1524, by the publication of a pamphlet, "On Mercantile Trade and Usury."⁹⁴ His writings on usury, to which was added another work in 1540, testify to the active interest which he took in the moral aspects of the progress of trade and commerce occasioned by the discoveries and the more intimate intercourse between nations resulting from them. In his work "Von Kaufshandlung," he again prohibits the taking of interest. "Whoever lends in such wise as to receive more in return, is a public and condemned usurer." For the rest, this treatise contains many stimulating ideas and furnishes an insight into the conditions of the time. But the author undeniably goes too far in his demand that the existing commerical societies ought to be abolished. He lacked the necessary breadth of view and practical experience to pass judgment on such a question. The desire to represent the new doctrine as useful for a general reform was not sufficient, and Scriptural passages, especially from the Old Testament, could not be generalized so as to apply to all times and conditions.

Luther's modern admirers have highly praised one of his works, written to improve the condition of the schools. It is entitled "To the Aldermen of all the Cities of Germany, that They Should Establish and Maintain Christian Schools,"⁹⁵ the emphasis being on the word "*Christian*." This appeal was occasioned by the observation that his cause was injured by the deterioration of the schools resulting from the religious controversy he had started. It was his inten-

⁹³ Weimar ed., Vol. XI, pp. 314 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXIX, pp. 45 sqq. Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 411 sq.

⁹⁴ Weimar ed., Vol. XV, pp. 293 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXII, pp. 199 sqq. Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 79 sqq.

⁹⁵ Weimar ed., Vol. XV, pp. 27 sqq.; Erl. ed., Vol. XXII, pp. 168 sqq. Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. VI, pp. 3 sqq.; also my article on "Luther" in the *Pädagogisches Lexikon*, new edition by Roloff.

tion, as he himself expressly confessed, to obtain the necessary spiritual and secular forces for the promotion of his Gospel by re-establishing Christian schools, *i. e.*, schools in which the new religion was inculcated. Besides practicable suggestions regarding education, the pages of this work are burdened with inconceivably crass accusations against the educational policy of the ancient Church, on which he wishes to inflict a mortal wound in the name of education by means of the Scriptures.

It was impossible for Luther, in discussing such questions as the nature of trade and education, to abandon the controversial narrowness which marked his ecclesiastical position.

In his literary activity, his predilection was Holy Writ. He provided the books of the New Testament which he translated into German with prefaces that characterize his standpoint in regard to the Bible and theology. The most significant thing in the latter regard is his preface to the Epistle to the Romans. It is little less than an epitome of his theological teaching, especially as it centers around the idea that St. Paul condemns "the entire ulcerous and reptilian complex of human laws and commandments which drowns the world at present" and teaches the doctrine of justification by faith alone.⁹⁶ His general preface to the New Testament is equally noteworthy, as it emphasized that those portions of the Scriptures are the best which show "how faith in Christ gives life, justice, and happiness." Hence his preference for "the Gospel of St. John and his first Epistle, the Epistles of St. Paul, particularly those addressed to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Ephesians, and the first Epistle of St. Peter; these are the books which reveal Christ. . . . They advance far beyond the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. . . . Compared with them, St. James' Epistle is an epistle of straw, since there is nothing evangelical about it."

In this manner his criticism of the Bible proceeds along entirely subjective and arbitrary lines. The value of the sacred writings is measured by the rule of his own doctrine. He treats the venerable canon of Scripture with a liberty which annihilates all certitude. For, while this list has the highest guarantee of sacred tradition and the backing of the Church, Luther makes religious sentiment the criterion by which to decide which books belong to the Bible,

⁹⁶ See the conclusion of the preface to Romans, 1522. Cfr. Erl. ed., Vol. LXIII, pp. 7 sqq. for a collection of Luther's prefaces.

which are doubtful, and which are to be excluded. At the same time he practically abandons the concept of inspiration, for he says nothing of a special illuminative activity of God in connection with the writers' composition of the Sacred Book, notwithstanding that he holds the Bible to be the Word of God because its authors were sent by God. As is well known, during the age of orthodox Lutheranism its devotees fell into the other extreme by teaching so-called verbal inspiration, according to which every single word of the Bible has been dictated by God. Catholic theology has always observed a golden mean between these extremes.

Luther always adhered essentially to his opinion of the Epistle of St. James as quoted above.⁹⁷ Relative to the other Biblical writings, his most striking assertions will be considered in the sequel. Even at the Leipsic disputation he had maintained that the second book of Machabees did not belong to the canon simply because of the difficulty presented by the passage quoted by Eck concerning Purgatory and prayers for the departed.⁹⁸ Later he simply excluded the so-called deutero-canonical books of the Old Testament from the list of sacred writings. In his edition they are grouped together at the end of the Old Testament under the title: "Apocrypha, i. e., books not to be regarded as equal to Holy Writ, but which are useful and good to read." Under this title the Lutheran Bible retains the following arrangement even to the present day: Judith, Wisdom, Tobias, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Machabees I and II, parts of Esther and of Daniel. Luther's New Testament is somewhat more conservative. After the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, it contains the Epistles to the Hebrews, those of St. James and St. Jude—three epistles which Luther carped at—and, lastly, the Apocalypse of St. John.

It is a fact that must not be overlooked that the parts of the Bible which Luther retained were taken over from the tradition of the past. By way of exception and as a matter of necessity, he thus conceded the claims of tradition. Though otherwise opposed to it, he took it as his guide and safeguard in this respect without admitting the fact. Thus his attitude towards the Bible is really burdened with "flagrant contradictions," to use an expression of Harnack, especially since he "had broken through the external authority of the written word" by his critical method.⁹⁹ And of this, Luther is guilty,

⁹⁷ Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, pp. 521 sqq.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, pp. 403 sq.

the very man who elsewhere represents the Bible as the sole principle of faith!

If, in addition to this, his arbitrary method of interpretation is taken into consideration, the work of destruction wrought by him appears even greater. The only weapon he possessed he wrested from his own hand, as it were, both theoretically and in practice.

His procedure regarding the sacred writings is apt to make thoughtful minds realize how great is the necessity of an infallible Church as divinely appointed guardian and authentic interpreter of the Bible. Deprived of the guidance of the Church, with subjectivism as his lodestar, Luther trod the path that led to an independent religion severed from divine revelation and therefore without foundation.

7. FREE CHRISTIANITY AND THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

When, in the period from 1520 to about 1525, Luther approached his doctrine of so-called free Christianity without binding dogmas,¹⁰⁰ he nevertheless revealed glimpses of an intention of adhering to the norms of the Christian religion. He speaks with vigor about truths undeniably based upon tradition and guaranteed by the Bible. In brief, he desired to be a true Christian. But the inexorable logic of his subjectivistic system produced a different result. It compelled him with the force of gravity, as it were, to abandon his positive foundation, notwithstanding his refusal to admit it to himself, since he does not follow out his conclusions to the end, but turns back after having gone halfway. It is impossible to form any other opinion of his expectorations, so often influenced by passion and saturated with rhetoric. Not infrequently they contain appeals to liberty which are irreconcilable with true Christianity. Evidently this phenomenon is associated with the impetuosity which animated him at the outset of his career. Under unfavorable circumstances he was not capable of moderating his temperament. In the stress of his labors he did not weigh his words. Inclined to doubt and criticism, his great success on the stage of the world swept him on to further doubt and criticism.

Only when the fanatical sects increased in strength, did a reaction set in, which caused him to favor a more positive attitude.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 9 sqq.; V, 432 sqq.

In his attacks upon them, his fear of a free Christianity gained the upper hand, prudence asserted her claims, and there came a time when Luther reversed his views and corrected his utterances. Instead of making internal experience and spiritual relish the sole criterion, he now emphasized (especially after 1525) the so-called external Word of God and the authority of the Bible, in so far as they seemed to him clear and indisputable. He placed the *rule* of faith in the foreground and conceded greater importance to good works. The sight of the general decadence and the dissolving effects of his sermons on Christian freedom in opposition to the law, compelled him more and more to desist from his attacks on the motive of fear of punishment in the fulfillment of the commandments. When, finally, the Peasants' Revolt began to shake the foundations of the social and moral order, his return to positive religion became more pronounced, or, as has been said, he turned from the free Evangel to the legal structure of a Protestantism under state control.

Nevertheless, his early utterances on freedom and intellectual liberty are re-echoed in his later ones. The primitive fallacy of his system could not be eradicated. It took only certain impacts to strike his excitable mentality and cause him once more to espouse the cause of unrestricted liberty.

In the period of his early activity, *i. e.*, before 1525, while Luther was engaged in his struggle with the papacy and, in part, with himself, he expressed himself as follows concerning the rights of subjectivism:

"Neither the pope nor the bishop nor any other man has the right to dictate even so much as a syllable to a Christian believer, except with the latter's consent." Formerly, under the papacy, we had "no right to form an opinion," but now "all councils have been overthrown." No one, he says, may "command what men must believe." "If I am to know what is false doctrine, I have the right to judge." Let others arrive at whatever decision they please, "I also have the right to judge, whether I will accept it or not. . . . You yourself must be able to say, this is right, that is wrong. . . . God must tell you deep down in your heart: this is the Word of God." Autonomy, according to him, is to be maintained at all times,¹⁰¹ even towards the sermons which every member of the congregation may criticize, reject or accept.¹⁰² In fact, private judgment is to be exercised even in relation to himself (so he says incidentally); for "no one is bound to believe me, let each one look to himself. To warn all I am able, but stop any man I can-

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 482 sqq.

¹⁰² *Supra*, No. 4 of this chapter.

not."¹⁰³ "If we all are priests, how then shall we not have the right to discriminate and judge what is right or wrong in faith?" "A lowly man may have the right opinion; why, then, should it not be followed?" The Bible may be interpreted by everyone, even by a "humble miller's maid, nay, by a child of nine if it has the faith."¹⁰⁴

He intoned hymns of liberty relative to the commandments, particularly in his work on "The Freedom of a Christian," and thus brought about dire results because of the confusion they created. Once you have comprehended the Word by faith, he expressly says, "all commandments are fulfilled and you shall be free in all things." "No one can be forced."¹⁰⁵

Is the reception of the Sacraments also a free matter? In 1521 Luther declared: "Every individual ought to be free with regard to the reception of the Sacraments. If anyone does not wish to be baptized, let him please himself about it. If anyone does not wish to receive holy communion, that is his precious right. Also, if anyone does not wish to confess, that is his right before God."¹⁰⁶ He had already disposed of confession as a Sacrament. With respect to Baptism and Communion, however, he subsequently defends the necessity of receiving them. In 1521 he writes in another work: "I approve of faith and Baptism, but no one should be compelled; everyone ought to be exhorted and to exercise liberty in these matters." Perhaps his confused declarations relative to Baptism and Communion are intended to exclude only physical coercion, whilst at the same time he completely spurns confession as such. Yet, according to his whole system (as many modern Protestant theologians admit), Baptism would not be necessary because "salvation is possible without Baptism"; since "the salvation dispensed in the Sacrament is none other than that obtained through the instrumentality of the Word of the sermon" (Erich Haupt). The same is to be affirmed of the Lord's Supper. Consequently, according to Luther, Christ instituted Sacraments the use of which depends upon the good pleasure of men.

Such expressions—which could be multiplied considerably—lead us to the very brink of religious radicalism. In the heat of the combat against the dogmatic teachings of the papacy, during which, it is true, he did not always weigh his words, Luther proclaimed complete anarchy. Modern liberal Protestantism loves this kind of so-called liberty. Harnack styles it a "rich spring-tide" in the history of Luther's development, though, unfortunately, it was not followed by a "full-blown summer. . . . In those years," he says,

¹⁰³ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, p. 392.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 31; Vol. IV, p. 389.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 11; Vol. IV, pp. 487 sqq.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 9 sqq.

"Luther was elevated above himself and apparently overcame the limitations of his own individuality." In contrast with the demand of numerous contemporary Protestant theologians, who plead for a return to Luther as he appeared in the spring of life, when, as they allege, he was truly liberal-minded, we may quote this remarkable statement by Frederick Paulsen, the famous Protestant philosopher and historian: "The principle . . . to allow no authority on earth to prescribe the faith is anarchical. And on these lines there can be no church with the right of examining candidates for the ministry and holding visitations of the clergy, as Luther did." This author furthermore says that "Luther as pope," which he really wanted to be, glaringly contradicts that principle. "Whoever stands in need of a pope, had better be advised to stick to the real one at Rome." Fundamentally, Paulsen asserts, "an antinomy lies at the very root of the Protestant Church," namely: "There can be no earthly authority in matters of faith, and: There must be such an authority."¹⁰⁷

The religion which Luther cultivated in spite of his urge for liberty was the *religion of the enslaved will*. He ascribed so much influence to the omnipotence of God and to what he calls grace, that man's liberty to perform moral and meritorious acts was completely shattered. Now free-will was constantly and rightly regarded as the preliminary condition of divine worship. "God created thee without thy aid," says St. Augustine, "but He does not desire to justify thee without thy co-operation." Luther, however, treats man like a block of wood in matters pertaining to salvation. As he expresses it, man is ridden like a beast by God or by the devil.

Erasmus in 1523 decided to publish an attack on Luther's denial of the doctrine of free-will.¹⁰⁸ As a humanist he was particularly interested in defending the freedom of the will. On the other hand, Luther's obstinate negation of free-will was one of the most vulnerable spots in his doctrinal armor, against which an attack could be most easily launched with the prospect of winning wide-spread applause. It had not been an easy matter to persuade Erasmus to take this resolution. For he had long favored Luther at least to the extent of warmly approving his campaign not only against the existing abuses, but also against certain perfectly justifiable religious

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 485.

¹⁰⁸ Cfr. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 223 sqq.

usages and necessary ecclesiastical institutions, which he himself was also wont to criticize. After Luther's open rupture with the Church (1520) the cautious Erasmus became more and more guarded in his utterances relative to the religious innovation.¹⁰⁹ Amid his epistolary compliments to Luther one may read his assurance, that he would never separate himself from the divinely instituted spiritual authority of the Church; that he did not wish to bother about the clash provoked by the religious controversy, but desired to pursue his studies unperturbed; and that God had sent the strong medicine which Luther administered in order to purge His Church, since Christ had been well-nigh forgotten. It required remonstrations on the part of men in high authority, even in Rome, of the King of England and of the Emperor, to determine Erasmus to take up his pen against Luther.

In the spring of 1524 Luther heard that his erstwhile patron was engaged in composing a book against him. He correctly appraised the influence which Erasmus would exert upon the numerous humanistic parties which had formerly favored him, but had become estranged from his cause as a result of his violent activities. The voice of their highly revered leader was bound to turn the scales against him. Hence, in April, he wrote a strange letter to Erasmus, then at Basle. He said that he had nothing to fear from an attack, but, after flattering his antagonist for his rare qualities and merits, begs him: "Do not write against me, or increase the number and strength of my opponents; particularly do not attack me through the press, and I, for my part, shall also refrain from attacking you." "With patience and respect," he continues, he had observed that Erasmus, alas, did not possess grace from above to comprehend the new Evangel.¹¹⁰

Erasmus's treatise appeared at Basle in 1524; it was written in excellent Latin and bore the title: "*De Libero Arbitrio Diatribe*" (Discourse on Free-Will). The author triumphantly refutes the heresy of the enslaved will, and despite his great and often timid reserve, his critical rejection of the Biblical supports of Luther's theory is quite as brilliant as his use of the sacred text in defense of the Catholic doctrine.

According to Luther, he says, not only goodness, but also moral evil must be referred to God, which, however, conflicts with God's nature and is ex-

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 249 sq.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

cluded by His holiness. Luther maintains that God punishes sinners who cannot be held accountable for their misdeeds. Hence, so far as this earthly life is concerned, laws and penalties are superfluous, because there can be no responsibility without freedom of choice.

"In defending free-will," thus writes the Protestant theologian A. Taube, "Erasmus fights for responsibility, duty, guilt, and repentance—ideas which are essential to Christian piety." "He vindicates the moral character of the Christian religion. . . ." ¹¹¹

It was not to be expected that Erasmus, who was a stranger to Scholasticism, would enter upon a technical discussion of his topic. Nor was it exactly necessary, although many points might have been made more telling, as, for instance, the refutation of Luther's doctrine of absolute predestination. The Catholics were highly elated at the "Diatribes" of Erasmus. Duke George of Saxony thanked him in a letter, but, in his frank and honest way, did not suppress the caustic remark: "Had you come to your present decision three years ago, and withheld Luther's shameful heresies in writing, instead of merely opposing him secretly, as though you were not willing to do him much harm, the flames would not have extended so far." ¹¹² The "Diatribes" also met with the approval of close friends of Luther. Wolfgang Capito had previously declared his opposition to Luther's theory of the enslaved will. Peter Mosellanus (Schade) of Leipsic had spoken so strongly against Luther's theses and his teaching on predestination that warning reports were sent to Wittenberg. George Agricola, the learned naturalist, who at first admired Luther, was repelled by his denial of free-will. ¹¹³ Melanchthon, to whom, despite his former approval, this denial became painful in the course of time, thanked his friend Erasmus for the moderation which he had observed. He became more and more convinced that Erasmus was right in certain cardinal theological points, and himself became an opponent of determinism. ¹¹⁴

8. COMPANIONS IN ARMS AT WITTENBERG

Next to Luther, the most attractive personality at the University of Wittenberg was the young humanist and theologian *Philip Me-*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 261 sq.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 261 sq.

lanchthon, a small and emaciated man, endowed with a pair of glowing eyes. The reputation for learning which this precocious youth enjoyed, powerfully attracted students. He lectured on Homer and St. Paul's Epistle to Titus, on rhetoric and the Gospel of St. Matthew. Even after his transfer, in 1519, from the chair of Greek to the theological faculty, he continued to occupy himself chiefly with humanism, especially in his literary productions. He never became a doctor of theology. He combined an excellent gift for teaching with a love for youth and great sociability. His lectures he flavored with instructive anecdotes, but never became rhetorical or violent, like Luther. He had difficulty in overcoming his habit of stuttering. In addition to his academic lectures he conducted a *schola privata* for beginners, whom he, an ardent friend of youth, prepared for the higher studies. In 1524 he published for their benefit an "Enchiridion of the Elements for Boys." It was a reader composed of church prayers, passages from the Bible, and secular material, such as moral axioms of the Seven Wise Men and excerpts from Plautus. Despite his many labors, Melanchthon knew how to preserve his delicate health by a life of regularity and extraordinary abstemiousness. He rose early and devoted the first hours of the morning to his extensive correspondence. His letters were composed with great care and a facile and fluent Latinity similar to that which distinguishes his printed works. In the use of the German vernacular, however, he was far less skilled than Luther.

Melanchthon's domestic life presented attractive features. In the fortress-like house which he occupied, and which still stands, he constructed a quiet "sanctuary" reserved for intercourse with his familiars and learned friends as well as for study. It was there he was found by a French scholar who paid him a visit, rocking the baby's cradle by means of a ribbon and reading a book which he held in his right hand. The wife of this lay-theologian was the daughter of a burgomaster, a quiet, sensible woman, like himself very charitable towards the poor.

The nuns who left their convents and came to Wittenberg were not welcome in Melanchthon's home. Aside from the fact that there were some among them who, like Catherine von Bora, flaunted their noble descent too ostentatiously in the presence of Melanchthon's wife, who belonged to the middle class, Melanchthon and

his spouse regarded with aversion the worldly conduct of these nuns and their fawning upon Luther. Melanchthon, in a confidential letter to Camerarius, couched in Greek, declared that they had "en-snared" Luther "with every kind of strategy." The conduct of many married clergymen and fugitive monks was likewise distasteful to him.

Melanchthon became very sad when, on a journey to his native town of Bretten in the Lower Palatinate (Baden), he was forced to note the moral decadence which had set in as a consequence of the religious controversy. According to a sufficiently authenticated tradition, he frankly encouraged his mother (either at that time or on the occasion of a visit he paid her in 1529) not to be disturbed by the religious controversies.¹¹⁵ He well remembered the admonition of his father, the strictly religious George Schwarzerd, an armorer by trade, who, nine days before his demise, had adjured his family never to separate from the Catholic Church. The papal nuncio Campeggio, on the occasion of his first visit, endeavored through the instrumentality of his secretary, Nausea, to induce Melanchthon to return to the mother Church, but the attempt proved futile.

In 1521 Melanchthon championed Luther's cause by publishing a work against Thomas Rhadinus, an Italian antagonist of the Reformation. In this work he went so far as to demand that the authorities of the Empire should use force against the Pope. Soon after he penned an attack upon the Paris Sorbonne. He merited Luther's highest esteem by his "Loci Communes Rerum Theologiarum." "I esteem Philip like myself," Luther wrote in September, 1523, "aside from the fact that he puts me to shame, nay, excels me, in learning and virtue."¹¹⁶

Despite his disapproval of the extremes to which his friend Luther went, Melanchthon was fascinated by his personality. He was not sufficiently self-reliant, too much of a specialist and pliant Erasmian to adopt a firm and consistent line of conduct. He aided Luther at all times, by polishing with his skilled pen the latter's impetuously uttered thoughts and bringing them into some kind of scientific form, though he would have preferred to escape from the too turbu-

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 270.

¹¹⁶ Letter to Billikan, September 17, 1523; *Briefwechsel*, IV, p. 230.

lent struggle to devote himself entirely to his humanistic studies, without, of course, abandoning his "honored master" in his conflict with the Roman Antichrist.

As early as 1525, it could be seen more clearly that Melanchthon was animated by a desire to play the rôle of "Erasmian mediator" in Lutheran theology. He thought the breach between the old and the new theology could be healed and hoped for a conciliatory attitude on the part of the Catholic opposition, all the more fervently in proportion as he, who was more timid and more keenly sensitive than Luther, was affrighted at the consequences of the ecclesiastical revolution. Accordingly he devoted himself to the humanities in order to prepare the way for that vague religious unity which ever hovered before his mind. Because of his extraordinary success in the humanistic field of learning his friends bestowed upon him the honorary title of "*Praeceptor Germaniae*."¹¹⁷

Of quite a different stamp were the other men who stood closest to Luther as friends and co-workers.

Justus Jonas, provost of the church of All Saints at Wittenberg, was likewise a disciple of Erasmus, but was far less active in behalf of humanism than in his support of Luther.¹¹⁸ As doctor of both canon and civil law, he had taught the latter at the University of Wittenberg, but after his promotion to the theological doctorate through Luther's influence, entered the theological faculty and boldly lectured on portions of the Bible, such as St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The neo-humanists of Erfurt and the school of Mutianus introduced this unfortunate priest to the pleasures of life. He was of a jovial and lively disposition. Luther derived much consolation and relaxation from his company. By translating his Latin works into German, which he accomplished with great facility, Jonas rendered greater services to Luther than by his scholarship. His lack of theological erudition and profundity were compensated by a firm, nay, fanatical attitude. Few men have treated their opponents more disgracefully and unfairly and with worse personal invectives than Jonas. He entitled the Latin apology of his marriage, published in 1522, thus: "In defense of Clerical Marriage against John Faber, the Patron of Harlotry." Among the defects of his character, ac-

¹¹⁷ Cf. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, pp. 319 sqq., 346 sqq., 360 sqq.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 413 sqq.

cording to G. Kawerau, was a "constant, often petty concern in the increase of his income."¹¹⁹

A third co-worker of Luther was *John Bugenhagen*, a native of Wollin in Pomerania, hence called "Pomeranus," the intruding city parson of Wittenberg.¹²⁰ After he had passed through the humanistic current of his age, he attended private lectures in theology at Luther's side; though a priest, he had until then kept himself rather aloof from theology. With his practical talents and energy, which often degenerated into harshness, he, as parish priest of Wittenberg, commenced quite early to unfold an extensive activity for the advancement of Lutheranism, both in the electorate of Saxony and far beyond its confines. His ability as an organizer made him indispensable to Luther, who eulogized him as "Bishop of the Church of Wittenberg," as the chief support of the "Evangel" besides his Philip, as a great theologian and a man of nerve. Because he supplied a (rather deficient) commentary on the Psalms, Luther said that Bugenhagen was the "first on earth who deserved to be called interpreter of the Psalter."¹²¹ The most opposite of these epithets was that of the "man of nerve"—*multum habet nervorum*. Köstlin rightly characterizes Bugenhagen as "merely a subordinate, though endowed by nature with considerable powers of mind and body."¹²² His various "church regulations" were of greater importance than his writings. Energetically and successfully he defended Luther's doctrine of the Last Supper when the Swiss theologians denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist in Zwingli's letter to Albert of Reutlingen and his treatise "On the True and False Religion," published in March, 1525.

Nicholas von Amsdorf, who first taught theology at Wittenberg, became pastor and superintendent of the new religion in Magdeburg in 1524, and as such always co-operated with Luther as his confidential adviser.¹²³ Among all his friends he was most closely akin to him in spirit and most appreciative of his mental sufferings and struggles. He heartily concurred in the most unrestrained assertions and outbursts of Luther, nay, possibly even outdid him. Luther called him "a born theologian." Later champions of orthodox

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 405 sqq.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 407.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

Lutheranism have glorified Amsdorf as the Eliseus of the Elias, Luther, or even as a second Luther. The thick-set man with his sharp features was a reckless enthusiast and became conspicuous by his extreme views at the very outset of the struggle. In 1523 he proclaimed it as his deliberate judgment that a Christian prince is under obligation to bear arms in defense of the true Gospel. Luther dedicated to him his "Address to the Nobility" and Melanchthon his edition of "The Clouds" of Aristophanes. Amsdorf never married, although he affirmed in one of his writings that marriage was a divine command incumbent upon all priests.

Among Luther's sympathizers in the secular faculties of Wittenberg University the jurist *Jerome Schurf* was the most conspicuous.

Luther also had sympathizers and active co-workers in the Augustinian Order during the initial stages of the new movement. Pre-eminent amongst these was *Wenceslaus Link*, a man experienced in business and fluent of speech. The Saxon congregation under Staupitz comprised certain monasteries in the Low Countries, such as Antwerp, Dordrecht, and Ghent. There Lutheranism took root, especially through the efforts of two priors, Jacob Probst and Henry Moller. The former was a native of Ypres, the latter of Zutphen (Sutphen). Probst evaded the severe censures of the edict, first by issuing a denial of his teachings, and later (in August, 1522) by secretly escaping to Wittenberg. Moller likewise succeeded in reaching Wittenberg before the censures became effective. In contrast with these, two younger Augustinians were burned at the stake in Brussels, the capital of the Low Countries, on July 1, 1523, in consequence of their obstinate adherence to their heretical opinions. Their names were Henry Vos and John van Eschen. Luther extolled them in his hymn on the two so-called martyrs. A third Augustinian, Lambert Thorn, who succeeded Probst in the office of preacher, was likewise condemned to death in Brussels, but escaped with his life for unknown reasons.

Luther derived assistance also from the ranks of the Franciscans. Thus he was aided by the popular orators John Eberlin and Henry von Kettenbach, and by the writers Frederick Myconius and Conrad Pellican. Among the Dominicans who rallied round his banner was the talented young monk, Martin Bucer, whom he had partially won over by the disputation at Heidelberg. The German Dominicans did not furnish him with another man of repute, neither from the

Saxon nor from the Upper German province nor from the Upper German congregation. On the whole, the Dominicans as well as the Franciscans consistently and decisively maintained their Catholic position and opposed the religious innovation. They assigned their most capable writers to enter the lists in defense of the ancient faith. Oecolampadius left the Brigittine monastery at Altomünster and Ambrose Blaurer deserted the Benedictine monastery of Alpirsbach to join the new movement. Both labored with success in the interests of the religious revolt.

Caspar Schwenckfeld, an eccentric and fanatical layman, was a friend of Luther for many years. He intended to bring about a reformation of Christianity on the basis of Lutheranism along novel lines of his own. He was born of a noble family in the duchy of Liegnitz. When Luther took his stand against indulgences, Schwenckfeld was already inclined to join him. In the beginning of the twenties he tried to persuade the prince of Liegnitz to introduce the new religion into his native city and into all Silesia. Though a layman, he preached with unction, and his captivating manners, coupled with an impressive appearance, enabled him to win many adherents, especially among the nobility.¹²⁴ In his endeavor to arouse men to a realization of the seriousness of life, he took offense at the omission of good works from Luther's doctrine and censured the loose conduct which he observed about him, in his "Admonition" against "carnal liberty and the errors of the common people," published in 1524. In the following year he pretended to have received by private revelation a new doctrine of the Lord's Supper which abandoned the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. His doctrine on the Eucharist was not approved by Luther, Jonas and Bugenhagen, whom he visited at Wittenberg, notwithstanding the fact that he did not incline to the rationalistic theories of Zwingli. In vain he explained to Luther, on December 1, 1525, his supposedly deeper conception of Christ's abiding survival in the faithful without a Eucharist, Sacraments or a church. In the course of his exposition he ardently advised Luther to abandon his idea of a congregational church with general communion and in lieu thereof establish congregations composed of revived Christians, such as Luther himself had dreamed of at times. Luther did not wish to break with this influential man, but a breach did come later. According to Schwenckfeld's statement, Luther had

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 78 sqq.

admitted the plausibility of his doctrine of the Eucharist, even though it was as yet undemonstrated, and declared: "Dear Caspar, wait a little while." Probably he merely intended in this fashion to get rid of the importunate Schwenckfeld. The latter, however, was not inclined to wait, but provoked an open controversy, in which, without entirely denying Luther's teaching, he frankly and severely exposed its weaknesses, particularly in their moral implications. His example reveals anew how the arbitrary subjectivism of Luther aroused opposition on the part of his adherents and introduced chaos into the very bosom of the new religion.

For the rest, Schwenckfeld was one of the few men who, having entered into relations with Luther, refused to succumb to the fascination of his personality. The friends whom we have enumerated above, and many others, yielded to that exceedingly powerful charm. There is abundant evidence of the superior force which he exercised in his personal intercourse with others, such as John Kessler, Albert Burrer, Peter Mosellanus, and, at a later date, Mathesius, Spangenberg, Aurifaber, Rhegius, and Cordatus. All agree that there was something charming about his affability, his attractive speech, and constancy in the midst of trouble.¹²⁵ One may say that he was by nature endowed with an immense power of suggestion, intensified by his exterior appearance, particularly by his flashing eyes. In addition, the influence of his personality was augmented by the glory of his unexampled success.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 268 sqq.

CHAPTER XI

THE TEMPESTUOUS YEAR, 1525—LUTHER'S MARRIAGE

For various reasons the year 1525 must be called a tempestuous year. First of all the Peasants' War stamped its character upon it. Germany experienced tumults such as it had never seen before, which shook Luther's work and influenced his mind. Seldom was he so vehemently perturbed as during these momentous months, in the course of which, strange to say, occurred his marriage.

The year 1525 witnessed the formation, on the one hand, of a more compact union of the Catholic princes opposed to the new movement, and, on the other, the preparation of the fatal Protestant alliance of Torgau and the emergence of the war-like figure of Philip of Hessen. It marked the energetic assembly of Mayence, which fanned the fury of Luther, but also the defection of extensive territories, among them Prussia, and the violent introduction of the religious change in the electorate of Saxony, brought about by the new Elector. Luther was compelled to wrestle with the Anabaptists and other fanatics, with powerful enemies in the Catholic camp, and with the triumphal march of Erasmus' polemical pamphlet on free-will, to which, in 1525, he opposed his treatise "On the Enslaved Will," a work begotten literally in storm and stress.

Beyond the German frontier Emperor Charles was engaged in a sanguinary contest with the king of France. Francis was captured at Pavia, but the victory of the imperial arms led to serious conflicts with the Italian States and with Pope Clement VII. At the same time, the power of the Turks assumed menacing proportions along the eastern border of the Empire and in the Mediterranean Sea, with no signs of an energetic defense, which was made impossible by the unsettled state of the Catholic forces and Luther's hostility towards the Christian undertakings against the Turks.

I. LUTHER AND THE PEASANTS' WAR

In 1524, the cities of Allstedt and Orlamünde in Thuringia had been violently excited by Thomas Münzer and Karlstadt, respectively.