

The Life Of Dr. Martin Luther

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By
Martin Luther

Collected and arranged
By: M Michelet "Author of History of France" Etc

Translated by: William Hazlitt ESQ
Of the Middle Temple Barristor At LAW

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Part 2b

CHAPTER III.

1523—1525.

Carlstadt—Munzer—War of the peasants.

“PRAY for me, and assist me to crush under foot the Satan who has risen up at Wittemberg against the gospel, in the name of the gospel. We have now to combat an angel, become, as he thinks, an angel of light. It will be difficult to make Carlstadt give way by means of persuasion; but if he will not yield of his own accord, Christ will compel him to do so. For we, who believe in the Master of life and of death, are ourselves masters of life and of death.” (12 March, 1523.)

“I have determined to interdict him the pulpit which he has rashly ascended without any call thereto, where he is in despite of God and man.” (19th March.)

“Carlstadt is angry with me because I have interdicted his preaching and withdrawn his licence. I have not condemned his doctrine, though I am exceedingly displeased at his occupying himself almost entirely with ceremonies and external things, and neglecting the true Christian doctrine, that is to say, faith and charity. . . . With his foolish manner of teaching, he is leading the people to imagine that they are Christians if they fulfil the most trifling requisites; so they don't go to confession, and do break images, according to him, they well nigh perform all that is necessary. . . . His ambition is to set up as a new doctor on his own account, and to establish his rules and system on the ruin of my authority.” (30th March.)¹

“This morning I took Carlstadt aside, and entreated him to publish nothing against me; if he did, I said, I should be compelled to butt at him in right earnest, which I wished

¹ See Appendix XXV.

to avoid. He swore, by all that is sacred, he would not assail me." (21st April.)

"We must communicate instruction to the weak gently and patiently. Would you, after you yourself had done sucking, desire to cut off the breasts whence you had derived nourishment, in order that none after you might resort to the same life-supporting fountain? If mothers were to cast away and abandon the children which, in their first infancy, are unable to eat the same food they eat when they grow up, what would become of you? Dear friend, if you have sucked enough, and grown up enough yourself, I pray you to let others suck and grow up in their turn."

Carlstadt had abandoned his duties as professor and arch-deacon at Wittemberg, though without resigning the salary, and retired, unauthorized by the elector or the university, first to Orlamund and then to Jena; a circumstance which had greatly contributed to the displeasure now manifested against him on the part of the other leaders of the Reformation. The university having earnestly called upon him to return to his duties, he not only refused to obey the mandate, but accompanied the refusal by a highly insulting message.

"Carlstadt," writes Luther, on the 7th Jan., 1524, "has set up a printing press at Jena, but the elector and our academy have promised, conformably with the imperial edict, to permit no publication to be sent forth which has not previously undergone the examination of the commissioners. It is not to be endured, that Carlstadt and his people should be alone permitted to emancipate themselves from due submission to the authorities." "Carlstadt is as indefatigable as ever; his new presses at Jena have, I am told, already sent forth, or will very soon have done so, no fewer than eighteen works." (14th Jan., 1524.)

"Let us leave gloom and disquietude to Melancthon, as better suiting the turn of his mind. For ourselves, we will fight out the fight, without taking more heed to him than is absolutely necessary; our cause is the cause of God, and not of individuals; it is the business of God, and it will be the work of God, the victory of God. He could fight and conquer without us, if he so thought fit. If, therefore, he judges us worthy to be accepted as his champions in this holy war, we may well be proud, we may well be earnest and

ever ready to manifest our devotion in his service. I exhort you, and the rest through you, that you give way to no fear of Satan; that you permit not your hearts to fail within you. If we are, indeed, fighting an unjust fight, we shall of necessity be crushed beneath the attacks of our enemies; if our cause be just, as I say it is, there is a just God, who will make that justice of our cause shine forth in the eyes of all men as clearly as the sun at noonday. Perish who shall perish; live who shall live, 'tis no business of ours." (22 Oct. 1524.)

"We shall again summon Carlstadt in the name of the university to return to his duty, requiring him to quit the place where he has no authority to preach, and to resume his post at Wittenberg, where his assigned mission is; if he fail to obey the summons, we shall report him to the elector." (14th March, 1524.)

At last, Luther considered it his duty to visit Jena himself.¹ Shortly after his arrival, Carlstadt, who regarded himself as aggrieved by a sermon which Luther had delivered, solicited an interview with the latter. It took place in Luther's apartments, in the presence of a great number of witnesses. After infinite recriminations to and fro,² Carlstadt said, "Well, well, doctor, preach as much against me as you like, I shall be at no loss what to do on my part." *Luther*: "If you have anything to say, say it boldly, or write it, and fear not to express your whole mind." *Carlstadt*: "Be assured I will not; I fear no one." *Luther*: "Ay, write against me if you will, and publicly." *Carlstadt*: "If that be what you desire, I will satisfy you, and perhaps more than enough; I have plenty of materials, I can tell you." *Luther*: "'Tis a bargain, and I will give you a florin as my pledge of battle." *Carlstadt*: "A florin!" *Luther*: "Ay, call me liar, if I do not." *Carlstadt*: "Well, I accept your challenge." Thereupon Luther took a gold florin out of his pocket, and presented it to Carlstadt: "There is the money," said he; "and now begin as soon as you like; strike boldly; you shall have as good as you bring, rely upon it." Carlstadt took the florin, which he handed round for the inspection of each person present: "Dear brethren," said

¹ See Appendix XXVI.

²Ib XXVII.

he, "you see I've got my earnest money; it cannot now be said that I have no warrant for writing against Doctor Martin. Be you all witness to this matter." He then put the florin in his purse, and shook hands with Luther, who drank a bumper to his health, which Carlstadt responded to, saying, after he had done so: "Dear doctor, I entreat you to put no obstacle in the way of my printing what I shall desire to print; and that when this matter is settled, you will not seek to prevent my embracing the new kind of life I contemplate—that of cultivating the earth with the labour of my own hands." *Luther*: "Fear nothing; I shall of course let your printers print what you like, since 'tis I myself gave the challenge; have not I this moment handed you a florin as my pledge of fair battle? Let the attack be as unflinching as you will; the more rigorous it is, the better I shall like it." They once more shook hands, and then separated.¹

Finding, however, that the townspeople of Orlamund espoused, with somewhat too active an enthusiasm, the opinions of Carlstadt—they drove away their minister, because he would not adopt them—Luther found it advisable to obtain an order from the elector for the removal of the innovator from that place.² Previous to his departure, Carlstadt assembled, by the ringing of the church bells, the population of Orlamund; first, all the men, and then all the women, in the public square, and read to them a solemn farewell letter, which drew tears from the whole of the congregation. "Carlstadt has written a farewell address to the people of Orlamund, which he signs: *Andrew Bodenstein, expelled, without a previous hearing or condemnation, by Martin Luther*. You see that I, who no long while ago just escaped being a martyr myself, am now, in my turn, a maker of martyrs. Egranus, also, I hear is setting up for a martyr; a martyr, as he says, to the papists and the Lutherans; *the papists and the Lutherans!*—a fine story, truly! You cannot think what a general sensation has been created here by Carlstadt's dogma upon the sacrament; 'tis in everybody's mouth. — has made his recantation, and implores us to forgive him; he, too, had been compelled to quit the country by us cruel persecutors, and all for no fault of his own.

However, as he is penitent, I have sent to solicit his reinstatement; whether I shall obtain it, I know not. Martin of Jena has also received orders to quit the place; he delivered a farewell sermon, in which with tears in his eyes he entreated for pardon, but the only answer we gave him was five florins, which he subsequently made an addition to, by sending people round the town to beg for him. I think these things will do a great deal of good to such of our preachers as have a tendency to ride the high horse; they will derive thence an excellent lesson, teaching them to conduct themselves with becoming modesty." (27th Oct. 1524.)

Carlstadt on quitting Orlamund proceeded first to Strasburg and thence to Bâle. The direction thus taken would seem the result of instinct, for as his footsteps bent towards Switzerland, so the inclination of his doctrines was towards those of the Swiss Reformers, *Æcolampadius*, *Zwinglius*, &c.

"I defer writing upon the eucharist until Carlstadt shall have vomited forth the poisonous exhalations he threatened us with, at the time I gave him the gold florin. *Zwinglius*, and *Leo the Jew* in Switzerland, hold the same opinions with Carlstadt; and thus the new plague of Egypt is diffused from country to country; but Christ reigns, though for the present he fights not." (12th Nov. 1524).

He felt it necessary, however, to take notice of the charge that he had unjustly and arbitrarily driven forth Carlstadt from Saxony. "As to the reproach put forward against me, by Carlstadt, that I have tyrannically expelled him from our country, I should not take the matter much to heart, were the charge well founded; but I believe I can very effectually clear myself from it. In the first place I can safely say, I have never mentioned him to the elector, for I have never said a word to the prince at all; have never heard him speak, have never even seen him, except once at Worms, on the occasion of my second appearance before the emperor. I have often, however, written to his highness, by the medium of *Spalatin*, and latterly with most urgent entreaties, that he should resist the man, or rather evil spirit, of *Alstet*.¹ But my letters have produced no effect, and I have with reason

¹ *Alstet* was the residence of *Munzer*, the leader in the revolt of the peasants, of which we shall make mention presently.

conceived great resentment against the elector. Carlstadt, I can assure him, need have no apprehensions of the prince taking any measures against him, and so may spare his abuse in that quarter. As to duke John Frederick, I admit that I have often spoken to him on these matters, and have made him acquainted with the perverse ambition and nefarious proceedings of Carlstadt.

“ Whatever may have occasioned this man’s departure from amongst us, I am thoroughly glad we have got rid of him, and I may wish he had not taken up his abode among you.

“ Upon the strength of one of his writings, he had almost persuaded me, not to confound the spirit which animates him with the seditious and homicidal spirit of the man of Alstet; but when, by order of my prince, I proceeded to Orlamund, I soon found, on observing the worthy Carlstadian Christians there, what sort of seed it was he had sown. I had to thank God most heartily that I was not stoned ere I got away from the place, for there were men among them, who, by way of a parting benison, said to me; ‘Go, in the name of a thousand devils; we hope you will break your neck before you reach the gates!’ A fine set, truly! They have represented themselves in very different colours in the little book they have lately published, but I know them thoroughly now. Still I am by no means disposed for violent measures; if the ass had horns—that is to say, if I were prince of Saxony, Carlstadt should not be banished, unless very strong representations indeed were made to me to that effect. I would seek to conciliate him, and urge him not to disdain the goodwill of princes.¹

“ Such scandalous disorders as these do great harm to the gospel. A French spy told me distinctly, that his king had regular information of all these proceedings, that he had thence acquired the idea that we had ceased to respect religious or political order, or even the institution of marriage, and that, in fact, we were living in a state no degree superior to that of the beasts of the field.²

“ It will not do to scout at, or make a jest of Mr. Everybody

¹ Letter to the people of Strasburg; Luther’s Werke, ii 58 (See Appendix XXIX.)

² Tischreden, 417.

(*Herr Omnes*); God himself constituted certain authorities to direct the world; for it is a great feature in his magnificent system, that there shall be order here below."

Carlstadt at length threw off all disguise. "I yesterday," says Luther, in a letter dated 14th December, 1524, "received a communication from one of my friends at Strasburg, in reference to this man; after passing through that city, it seems, he went on to Bâle, and has since vomited forth five books, which are to be followed by two others to the same tune. In every one of them, I am denounced as a double papist, as the ally of Antichrist, and what not." In a letter, however, dated 13th June, 1525, he says: "My friends write me from Bâle, that Carlstadt's people there have been put in prison, and that his books had a very narrow escape from being publicly burned. He is still there, it seems, but in concealment. Ecolampadius and Pellican are writing in support of his opinions."

"Carlstadt had made up his mind to go and fix himself at Schweindorf; but Count Henneberg expressly refused him permission to do so, and directed the town council not to receive him for a single hour. I wish the count would do the same in reference to Strauss." (10th April, 1525.)

Luther was quite delighted at Carlstadt's open declaration of war: "The devil held his peace," says he, "until I bribed him with a florin. Thank God, that money was well placed, at all events! I never laid out money with a more satisfactory result." He proceeded to write several able pamphlets *Against the Celestial Prophets*.¹ "People," says he, "seem going to sleep, as though the devil himself were laid at rest, whereas, all the while, he is going round and round about, watchful as ever for whom he may devour. But, please God, though others are negligent, while I live he shall not gain his ends: while I live I will fight against him, let what will come of it.¹ All the people, now-a-days, reject that which does not happen to please each man's reason. 'Twas the same with the Arians, the Pelagians; and so, under the papacy, 'twas a sounding proposition that free-will might be instrumental to grace. The doctrine of faith and a good conscience, is far superior to that of good works; for even though the works

¹ Werke, ii. 10

are wanting, if there be faith, there is still hope of succour. Spiritual means alone should be employed in the inducing true Christians to acknowledge their sins.... But as to the rude herd, Mr. Everybody, they must, if necessary, be bodily driven to his work, so that, whether he will or no, he shall demean himself piously, under the influence of the law and of the sword, just as we keep wild beasts in good order by chaining them up.

“The spirit of the new prophet flies very high indeed; 'tis an audacious spirit that would have eaten up the Holy Ghost, feathers and all. Bible! sneer these fellows: Bibel, Bubel, Babel! And not only do they reject the Bible thus contemptuously, but they say they would reject God too, if He were not to visit them as he did his prophets. Well! since the evil spirit is thus obstinate in these men, I will not yield him an inch more than I have given him heretofore. I will speak of images, first according to the law of Moses, and I say that Moses prohibits only images of God.... Let us content ourselves with entreating our rulers quietly and gradually to suppress images, and meanwhile remove them from our own hearts.”

Further on, Luther expresses an ironical astonishment that these modern iconoclasts did not extend their pious zeal to the getting rid of their own money, or of any other precious object belonging to them which bore the stamp of any graven image. “To assist the weakness of these pious personages,” says he, “and to free them from that which so contaminates their appalled souls, a few pickpockets would not be without their use, seeing that the *celestial voice*, as they call it, is not loud enough to induce them to throw aside these vanities themselves. Perhaps even a little violence might be beneficial”¹

“When I was at Orlamund, discussing the question of images with the disciples of Carlstadt, after I had demonstrated from Holy Writ, that in all the passages of Moses which they cited, the idols of the pagans were alone referred to, one of these men, who doubtless thought himself the most able among them, came forward, and said to me: ‘Listen, thou! for I suppose I may “thou” thee if thou art a Christian.’ I

¹ Werke, ii. 13.

answered him: 'Call me what thou wilt.' I saw very well he would infinitely have preferred striking me a blow to speaking to me; at all events, he was so full of the spirit of Carlstadt, that the others could not induce him to hold his peace. 'If thou wilt not follow Moses,' continued he, 'thou shouldst at least submit to the gospel; but thou hast thrown the gospel under the table. It is we who will raise it thence; it shall not be suffered to remain where thou hast put it.' 'What does the gospel say?' I asked. 'Jesus says in the gospel,' replied he, 'I know not where it is, but my brethren are well acquainted with it, that the bride should take off her shift on the marriage night; in the same way we should take off and destroy all images, that we may become pure and free from the creature.'—*Hæc ille.*

"What could I do in the midst of such people as these, with their marvellous notions about breaking images being, according to the gospel, the same thing with the taking off the bride's shift on the marriage night? These words, and that phrase about the gospel being thrown under the table he certainly got from his worthy master; for, doubtless, Carlstadt had accused me of throwing down the gospel, in order that he might say he was come to raise it up. This ambitious pride of his is the cause of all his misfortunes, is that which has thrust him from the light into darkness.

"We are full of courage and cheerfulness, and we fight all the more successfully against these melancholy, timid, downcast souls, who fear the sound of a falling leaf though they fear not God; for such is the wont of the impious. Their passion, their monstrous aim is to domineer over God, his Word, and his works, and to turn them to their own purposes. They would not be so daring if God were not invisible and intangible. If he were a man, visible and present to the eye, he would make them fly before him with but a blade of straw for his weapon.

"He whom God truly inspires speaks freely and openly, without asking himself whether he stands alone, or whether others are standing by him. Jeremiah did this, and I may boast that I also did so.¹ Without any doubt, then, this

¹ "The spirit of these prophets has always very carefully got out of the way of danger, yet none the less it glorifies itself as magnanimous and

evasive and homicidal spirit which slips behind, and then excuses itself on the ground that at first it had not been strong enough in the faith; doubtless, I say, this spirit is the devil; the Spirit of God makes no such excuses. I know thee well, devil of mine

"... If you ask Carlstadt's people how this sublime spirit is arrived at, they refer you, not to the gospel, but to their reveries, to their vacuum. 'Place thyself,' say they, 'in a state of void tedium as we do, and then thou wilt learn the same lesson; the celestial voice will be heard, and God will speak to thee in person.' If you urge the matter further, and ask what this void tedium of theirs is, they know as much about it as Doctor Carlstadt does about Greek and Hebrew... Do you not in all this recognise the devil, the enemy of divine order? Do you not see him opening a huge mouth, and crying: 'Spirit, spirit, spirit!' and all the while he is crying this, destroying all the bridges, roads, ladders, in a word, every possible way by which the spirit may penetrate into you—that is to say, the external order established by God in the holy baptism, in the signs and symbols, and in his own Word. They would have you learn to mount the clouds, to ride the wind, but they tell you neither how, nor when, nor where, nor what; all these things you must learn of yourself, as they do."

"..... Martin Luther, an unworthy member of the church, and evangelist at Wittenberg, to all the Christians at Strasburg, the beloved friends of God. I could endure, up to a certain point, Carlstadt's excesses in the matter of images. I myself, in my writings, have done more harm to images than he will ever do by all his furious violence; but that which I cannot endure is, the urging and exciting people on to these courses, as though they were essential to salvation, and as though he who breaks not images cannot be a Christian. Now, without doubt, works do not constitute the

chivalrous spirit. As to me, I may say, without ostentation, that I appeared openly at Leipsig, ready to dispute in the presence of a hostile public. I presented myself at Augsburg, unprovided with a safe-conduct, before my greatest enemies; at Worms, before Cæsar and all the states of the empire, although I knew very well that my safe-conduct had been infringed. Throughout my spirit has remained free as a flower of the field." (1524.)

Christian; these external things, such as images and the sabbath, are left free in the New Testament, in common with all the other ceremonies of the law. St. Paul says, 'We know that an idol is nothing in the world.' If, then, idols be nothing, why then chain up and torture the conscience of Christians in the matter at all? If idols are nothing, whether they fall or whether they stand, what matters it?"

He passes on to a higher subject, the question of the real presence—that superior question of the Christian symbolism, in comparison with which the matter of images is of inferior importance. It was principally on this point that Luther found himself opposed to the reformation in Switzerland, and that Carlstadt was more peculiarly allied with that reformation, though the extreme nature of his political opinions might have led us to a very different conclusion.

"I confess that if Carlstadt, or any one else, had, five years ago, shown me that in the holy sacrament there is nothing but bread and wine, he would have rendered me a great service. I had at that time powerful temptations assailing me; I turned and twisted about, I struggled fiercely with my own thoughts; I should have been most joyful to have extricated myself from the doubts and difficulties which environed me round about. I saw well enough that, if I could make up my mind on the point, I could inflict in this way a most terrible blow on papism. . . . There are two others who have written to me on the subject, far abler men than Dr. Carlstadt, and who do not, like him, torture words into the shape which may happen to suit their present caprice or their present purpose. But, upon this matter, I am, as it were, chained up in a prison I cannot quit; the text is too powerful; nothing I have ever yet heard has lessened its effect on my mind.

"Even now, could some one prove to me, by solid reasoning, that there is nothing in the holy sacrament but bread and wine, there would be no need to employ all this violence in gaining me over to that view of the question. I am, unhappily, but too much inclined to that interpretation every time that the old man Adam makes himself felt within me; but as to what doctor Carlstadt sends forth on the subject, it affects me not at all, or rather, it confirms me in the opposite opinion; so that if I had not already arrived at a conclu-

sion, such idle trash as his, derived as it were from the air, at all events, not from Scripture, would suffice to convince me that his views were erroneous."¹

He had already, in his pamphlet *Against the celestial prophets*, thus expressed himself: "Carlstadt says, that, consistently with reason, he cannot conceive how the body of Jesus Christ should reduce itself into so small a compass; but I say, that, if we consult our reason, we shall no longer see any mystery in the matter. . . ." In the next page, Luther makes use of this almost incredibly daring buffoonery. "You think, perhaps, that Christ, having drunk too much at supper, muddled his disciples with unnecessary words."

This violent controversy of Luther against Carlstadt was embittered by the symptoms, which daily became more menacing, of a political outbreak in Germany. The doctrines of the daring theologian entirely corresponded with the thoughts and wishes which had for a long time past occupied the minds of the popular masses in Suabia, Thuringia, Alsace; in a word, all the western part of the empire. The populace, the peasantry, for ages slumbering in a dull, heavy sleep beneath the weight of feudal oppression,² had heard learned men and princes speak of liberty, of enfranchisement, and they applied to themselves that which was not at all designed to extend to them.³ The protest of the poor peasants of Suabia, its barbarian simplicity will

¹ Werke, ii. 58.

² See Appendix XXX.

³ The peasantry, however, had risen on several occasions previous to the Reformation. There had been insurrections in 1491, in 1492, in Flanders—when the insurgents, to the number of forty thousand, had painted on their standard the representation of an enormous cheese; and again, in 1502. The free towns had followed this example; Erfurt in 1509, Spire in 1512, and Worms in 1513. The disturbances had recommenced in 1524; but this time the insurgents were nobles. Franz Von Sickingen, their chief, thought the moment was come for laying hands upon the property of ecclesiastical princes; he had the audacity to lay siege to Treves. He was, it is said, directed in his movements by the celebrated reformers, Œcolampadius and Bucer, and by Hutten, who was then in the service of the archbishop of Mayence. The duke of Bavaria, the palatine, the landgrave of Hesse, came to relieve Treves, and having done so, resolved to attack Mayence, as a punishment for the presumed connivance of the archbishop with Sickingen. The latter perished; Hutten was proscribed, and thenceforth unprovided with an asylum; he continued, however, to write his violent, furious pamphlets until the day of his death, which happened not long after, in the midst of utter misery.

remain as a monument of courageous moderation. By degrees, the undying hatred of the poor for the rich aroused itself. Less blind, indeed, than in the *Jacquerie*, and already aiming at a systematic form—which, however, it did not attain until the time of the English *levellers*—it embarrassed itself with the germs of religious democracy, which everybody thought extinguished. Lollards, Beghards, a whole host of Apocalyptic visionaries put themselves in motion. The rallying word, at a later period of the insurrection, was, the necessity of a second baptism; but from the very commencement throughout, the aim was a fierce war against established order, against order of every description: a war against property, it was a robbery of the poor man; a war against science, it broke up all natural equality, it attempted God, who revealed everything to his saints, and books and pictures, according to it, were inventions of the devil.

The peasantry of the Black Forest were the first to rise,¹ and their example was immediately followed by the people of Heilbron, of Frankfort, Baden, and Spire; thence the conflagration extended itself to Alsace, where it assumed a character more terrible than in any other direction. We next see its progress in the Palatinate, in Hesse, in Bavaria. In Suabia, the principal chief of the insurgents was one of the petty nobles of the valley of the Necker, the celebrated Goetz Von Berlichingen, *Goetz with the Iron Hand*, who, by his own account, however, only became their general on compulsion.

“Complaints and amicable demands of the united body of peasantry, with their Christian prayers; the whole briefly set forth in twelve principal articles.

“To the Christian reader, peace and divine grace by Jesus Christ.

“There are, at this time, many Antichristians, who take the occasion of the union of the peasantry to blaspheme the gospel, saying: these are the fruits of the new gospel, under which nobody is to obey, but all are to rear up, and insolently rise against their superiors, assembling and collecting together in great crowds and with unseemly violence, in the inten-

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tion of abrogating all civil and ecclesiastical authority, and perhaps of slaying the persons who administer such authority. To this false and impious statement, the following articles will furnish a sufficient reply.

“ First, they repel the opprobrium with which it is sought to cover the word of God; and, next, they offer a Christian exculpation of the peasantry from the reproach of disobedience and revolt.

“ The gospel is not a cause of insurrection or disorder; it is the word which announces to us our Christ, our promised Saviour; the word and the life which it teaches are not hatred and violence, but love, peace, and patience. Since, then, the articles of the peasants, as will be manifestly seen, have no other aim than to make clear the gospel, and to live in conformity with it, how can the Antichristians designate the gospel a cause of disorder and disobedience. If the Antichristians and the enemies of the gospel resist such demands as ours, it is not the gospel which is the cause of this, but the devil, the mortal enemy of the gospel; who, by means of incredulity, has awakened in his followers the hope of oppressing and of effacing the word of God, which is only peace, love, and union.

“ It clearly results, hence, that the peasantry who in their articles demand such a gospel for their doctrine and for their life, cannot be justly called disobedient or rebellious. If God calls us, and urges us to live according to his Word, if he is willing to listen to us, who shall find fault with the will of God, who shall assail his judgments, or contend against that which it is his pleasure to do? He heard the voice of the children of Israel, when they cried unto him, and he delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh. And can he not now also save his people from their oppressors? Yes, he will save them, and that soon. Christian reader, read the following articles with attention, and judge between us.

“ 1. In the first place, it is the humble demand and prayer of us all, it is our unanimous will, that henceforth we may have the power and the right of electing and choosing a pastor for ourselves; that we may also have the power and the right of deposing him, if he should conduct himself in a manner not befitting his calling. This pastor, so elected by us, should be allowed to preach to us the holy gospel, clearly

and in all its purity, without any addition of human precept or command. For, in announcing to us none but the veritable faith, occasion is given to us to pray God, to solicit his grace, to form within us, and to confirm it, that veritable faith necessary to salvation. If the divine grace enters not within us, we remain mere flesh and blood, and are good for nothing. It is perfectly clear from the Scripture, that we cannot arrive at God otherwise than by the true faith, that we cannot attain heavenly bliss otherwise than by his mercy. We, therefore, necessarily require such a pastor and guide as is appointed in the Scripture.

“2. Since tithe is established as lawful by the Old Testament (which the New Testament has confirmed in all things), we are willing to pay our legal tithe of corn, in a fair and legal manner. . . . It is our wish, that, in future, certain men, to be selected for that purpose by the inhabitants of each parish, may receive and collect the tithe; that out of it they may supply the pastor elected by the parish with enough to support him and his family in comfort and decency, and that what remains shall be applied to the relief of the poor of the parish. If there should still remain a surplus, it should be reserved to meet the expenses of war, of convoys, and other similar charges, and so deliver the poor peasantry from the taxes with which they have been hitherto oppressed for such purposes. In cases where it may have happened that villages have, under a pressure of poverty, sold their tithe, those who have purchased it will have nothing to fear from us: we shall be willing to make arrangements with them suitable to the circumstances, so as to indemnify them as speedily and as fully as possible. But as to those who have acquired the tithe of a village, not by a fair purchase, but by the arbitrary appropriation of themselves or their ancestors, we owe them nothing, and we shall give them nothing. The tithe, in such cases, will be applied in the manner already described. As to the small tithe, and the tithe of cattle and sheep, we shall pay none such; for the Lord our God created these animals for the free use of man. We regard this tithe as the invention of man, and consequently illegal, and we shall, therefore, cease to pay it.”

In their third article, the peasants declare that they will no longer be treated as the property of their seigneurs. “For,”

say they, "Jesus Christ by his precious blood redeemed all men without exception, the herdsman equally with the emperor." They claim to be free, but free according to the gospel—that is to say, without licentiousness, and with a full recognition of authority, seeing that the gospel taught them to be humble, and to obey their rulers in all fitting and Christian things.

"4. It is contrary to all justice and charity, that the poor should have no share in the enjoyment of the game—the birds of the air, the fish in the running waters; and still more so, when all the while they are compelled to submit in silence to the enormous damage done to their fields by these beasts of the forest and birds of the air. It was not so ordained by God, who, when he created man, gave him power over all animals without distinction." . . . They add that, conformably with the Scripture, they would respect the just claims of such seigneurs as could prove, by clear title, their purchased right to particular fisheries; but that for the rest of the nobles, their alleged rights must forthwith cease and determine, without any indemnity whatever.

"5. All woods and forests, anciently common property, and which have passed into the hands of individuals by any other process than legal sale by legal parties, must return to their original proprietors, the local community, each of the members of which shall be entitled freely to derive thence the wood he requires for his use, in a proportion to be determined by the chief men in the parish.

"6. In this article, the peasantry demand an alleviation of the feudal services imposed upon them, and which they state are becoming day after day more and more overwhelming. They claim to serve *after the manner of their forefathers*, and according to the Word of God, and no otherwise.

"7. Let not the seigneur require at the hand of the peasant more gratuitous services than are set forth in their mutual compact.

"8. Many lands are rated too high. Let the seigneurs accept in this matter the award of such irreproachable men as may be selected, and diminish the rent according to their equitable decision, so that the peasant may not labour in vain; every labourer is entitled to the wages of his labour.

"9. Justice at present is administered with partiality. There are constantly new pains and penalties being esta-

blished. We desire that henceforth no person may be favoured more than another, and that we may keep to the old laws.

"10. We desire that the fields and grass lands which have been severed from the commons, in any other way than by equitable sale, may be restored to the community.

"11. The fines and other payments made to the lord upon the death of vassals, are revolting in themselves, and openly opposed to the will of God, for they are a direct spoliation of widows and children; we desire that they may be wholly and for ever abolished.

"12. If it should be found on examination that one or more of the preceding articles are opposed to the Holy Scriptures (which, however, we do not believe), we at once renounce them by anticipation. If, on the contrary, the Scriptures should, on further examination, warrant us in additional protests against oppressions exercised by man on his neighbour, we, in like manner, reserve our right to make those protests, and do make them by anticipation."¹

In this great crisis it was impossible for Luther to remain silent.² The nobles charged him with being the prime author of the disturbances; the peasants recommended their cause under the sanction of his name, and invoked him as arbiter in their demands: he did not refuse the dangerous and responsible charge.³ In his reply to their twelve articles he constitutes himself judge between the prince and the people; in no part of his life, perhaps, did he assume a position more elevated or more commanding.

The reply runs thus: "Exhortation to peace in answer to the twelve articles of the peasants of Suabia, and also against the spirit of murder and rapine manifested by the insurgent

¹ Werke, ii. 64. The articles were drawn up by Christopher Schappeler.

² He had already, in 1524, exhorted the elector and duke John to take vigorous measures against the revolted peasants. ". . . Jesus Christ and his apostles did not overthrow temples or break images, they gained men's minds by the word of God; and this done, the images and the temples fell of themselves. Let us imitate their example. Let it be our aim to detach our brethren and sisters from convents and from superstition. This accomplished, let the authorities do what they think fit with the deserted convents and the condemned images. What matters it to us how long these stone walls and these stone or wooden images remain, so that mind is free? . . . All this violence may serve the purpose of ambitious men, whose sole aim is notoriety, but it is not suited for those whose object is the salvation of souls." (21st August, 1524.)

³ See Appendix XXXII.

peasants in other districts. The peasantry now assembled in Suabia have drawn up, and, by means of the press, extensively diffused twelve articles, setting forth their complaints and grievances, as against authority.

“ In this document, what I most approve of, is that in the twelfth article they declare themselves ready to accept whatever gospel instruction shall be better than their own views, with reference to their complaints.

“ If, indeed, this be their real intention (and making this declaration, as they have done in the face of men, without fearing the light, it befits not me to draw any other conclusion), there is still good ground to hope for a satisfactory termination of all this agitation and disorder.

“ I must confess that I who am of the number of those who make the Holy Scriptures their constant study, being addressed by name by the peasants (who refer their case to me in one of their printed manifestoes),—I must confess, I say, that I feel peculiarly encouraged by this declaration on their part, to make public my opinion also on the matter in question, conformably with the precepts of charity which ought to unite all men. By so doing, moreover, I shall relieve myself before God and man from any reproach of having contributed by my silence to the evil, in the event of the present agitation terminating in a disastrous manner.

“ It is possible that they have only made the declaration I have referred to, with a view to the producing an effect upon the public mind in their favour; and doubtless there are among them men wicked enough to attempt such an imposition; for it is impossible that in so great a multitude all should be good Christians; the likelihood being that many among them seek to pervert the honest feelings and upright views of the rest, to the promotion of their own private and sinister designs. Well, if there be imposture in this declaration, I announce to the impostors that they shall not succeed; and I tell them that even were they to succeed it would be at the cost of their eternal damnation.

“ The matter in which we are now engaged, is great and dangerous; it affects both the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world, so nearly, that if this revolt were to extend itself and become successful, both one and the other would perish, the word of God and secular government, and

ere long nothing would be seen throughout Germany, but universal devastation and ruin. Under such grave circumstances, therefore, it is urgently necessary that we should give our opinion, upon all the points involved, freely and without respect to persons. At the same time, it is not less necessary that all should become attentive and obedient, that we should cease to close up our ears and our hearts, in the manner we have hitherto done, and which has given to the anger of God so full a movement, so terrible a swing. The many fearful signs which, in these latter times, have manifested themselves in the heavens and on the earth, unquestionably announce great calamities to Germany; changes hitherto unprecedented. We, to our own misfortune, trouble ourselves little about them, but God will none the less pursue the course of his chastisement, until he shall have at length softened our iron hearts.

“FIRST.—*To the princes and nobles*: It is quite clear that we have no one upon earth to thank for all this disorder and insurrection, but you yourselves, princes and lords, and you especially, blind bishops, insane priests and monks, who, even to this very day, hardened in your perversity, cease not to clamour against the holy gospel, although you know it is just, and right, and good, and that you cannot honestly say anything against it. At the same time, in your capacity as secular authorities, you manifest yourselves the executioners and spoilers of the poor, you sacrifice everything and everybody to your monstrous luxury, to your outrageous pride, and you have continued to do this until the people neither can nor will endure you any longer. With the sword already at your throat, your mad presumption induces you to imagine yourselves so firm in the saddle, that you cannot be thrown off. If you alter not, and that speedily, this impious security will break your necks for you. I have many and many a time exhorted you to beware, least the verse of the Psalmist, *He poureth contempt upon princes*, become applicable to you. Thus far all your efforts have tended to the accomplishment of those words in your persons; you seem determined that the club raised over you shall fall and crush you; let me implore you to take counsel ere it be not wholly too late.

“The signs of the anger of God which have appeared in the heavens and upon the earth, are addressed to you, hitherto

in vain. It is you, it is your crimes that God is about to punish. If the peasants, who are now attacking you, are not the ministers of his will, others, coming after them, will be so. You may beat them, but you will be none the less vanquished; you may crush them to the earth, but God will raise up others in their place; it is his pleasure to strike you, and he will strike you.

You fill up the measure of your iniquities by imputing this calamity to the gospel and to my doctrine. Go on with your calumnies; you will, ere long, discover their injustice. You refuse to learn from me what is the gospel, what my doctrine; there are others at your door who will teach you what both the one and the other are, in a way very different from mine, if you mend not speedily the error of your ways. Have I not at all times earnestly, zealously, employed myself in recommending to the people obedience to authority, to your authority even, tyrannous as it has been—intolerable as it has been. Who has combated sedition more energetically than I have always done? It is for this that the prophets of murder hate me as bitterly as they do you. You persecuted my gospel by all the means in your power, yet all the while that gospel called upon the people to pray for you, and aided you in supporting your tottering authority.

“See you not, that if I desired revenge, I should only have to stand silently by, laughing in my sleeve, and look on at the peasants carrying out their work; I might even, by making common cause with them, gash still deeper your wounds. God ever preserve me, as now, from such thoughts. Dear lords, whether you be friends or enemies to me, despise not the loyal succour I offer you—poor man though I be; and despise not, I entreat you, this sedition. I do not say that you are not stronger than those who have risen up against you; it is not they whom I would wish you to fear, but the Lord God in his anger. If he wills to punish you (and you have but too well deserved punishment at his hands), he will punish you; and if there were not peasants enough to act as his instruments, he would change stones into peasants; he would give power to one of them to kill a hundred of you; he would cause that against a weak unarmed peasant, neither your strength, nor your sharp weapons, nor your glittering armour should prevail.

“ Dear lords, in the name of God retire before the anger of God, which you see let loose against you.

“ We fear and avoid a drunken man. Cease your exactions, cease your cruel despotism; treat the peasants as a man of sense treats people who are drunk or insane.

✓ “ Enter into no contact with them, you know not how it may terminate. Use gentle means with them, lest the spark now lighted, extending itself gradually round, catching from point to point, produce, throughout Germany, a conflagration which nothing can extinguish. You will lose nothing by gentleness, and even though you were to lose some trifling matter, the blessings of peace would make it up to you a hundredfold. Resort to war, and you may be all of you swallowed up, body and goods. The peasantry have drawn up twelve articles, some of these containing demands so obviously equitable, that the mere circumstance of their requiring to be made, dishonours you before God and man, and realizes Psalm cvii., for *it pours out contempt upon princes.*)

“ I myself have many articles, and even still more important ones, perhaps, that I might present against you in reference to the government of Germany, such as I drew up in my book addressed to the German nobility. But my words passed unheeded by you as the wind, and you must now therefore undergo the immediate and pressing demands of private interests.

“ As to the first article, you cannot refuse them the free election of their pastors; they desire that these pastors should preach the gospel to them: authority may not and cannot interpose any prohibition of this, seeing, indeed, that of right it should permit each man to teach and to believe that which to him seems good and fitting, whether it be gospel or whether it be false. All that authority is entitled to prohibit is, the preaching up of disorder and revolt.

“ The articles having reference to the physical condition of the peasants, the fines, and payments upon death, the exaction of illegal services, &c., are equally just; for authority was not instituted for its own ends, nor to make use of the persons subjected to it for the accomplishment of its own caprices and ill passions, but for the interests and advantage of the people. Now the people have become fully impressed with ✓

this fact, and, being impressed with it, they will no longer submit to your crying extortions. Of what benefit were it to a peasant that his field should produce as many florins as it produces grains of corn, if his lord may despoil him of the produce, and lavish, like dirt, the money he has thus derived from his vassal, in fine clothes, fine castles, fine eating and drinking. What you must do, first and foremost, is to put a stop to all this vain luxury of yours, to close up the holes through which this money runs, so that you may leave some little matter in the peasant's pocket.

“SECOND PART.—*To the peasants.*—So far, dear friends, for the princes; now let me, in all kindness and charity, address myself to you. I have acknowledged that the princes and lords who prohibit the preaching of the gospel, and who load the people with intolerable burdens, have well merited that the Almighty should cast them from their seats, seeing that they have sinned against God and against man, and are without excuse.

“Nevertheless, though your complaints are just, and your demands reasonable, it behoves you to prosecute those demands with moderation, conscience, and justice. If you act with conscience, moderation, and justice, God will aid you; and even though subdued for the moment, you will triumph in the end; and those of you who may perish in the struggle, will be saved. But if you have justice and conscience against you, you will fail; and even though you were not to fail, even though you were to kill all the princes, you, body and soul, would be none the less eternally damned.

“Believe me, this is no trifling or jesting matter; it is a matter in which your body and your soul are intimately concerned. What you have to consider, is not your own strength or the wrongs you have sustained from your adversaries, but whether the course you pursue is consistent with justice and conscience.

“Put no trust, I pray you, in the prophets of murder whom Satan has raised up amongst you, and who proceed directly from him, though they sacrilegiously invoke the name of the holy gospel. They will hate me, I know, for the counsel I give you, they will call me hypocrite, but this I heed not a whit. What I desire is, to save from the anger of God the good and honest among you; I care not for the rest, I heed them

not, I fear them not; let them despise me, if they will, I know One who is stronger than all of them put together, and he tells me in the 3rd Psalm to do that which I am now doing. The tens of thousands, and the hundreds of thousands, intimidate not me. . . .

“ You invoke the name of God, and you say that you will act according to his Word; forget not, before all things, that God punishes him who takes his name in vain. Dear friends, keep the fear of his anger ever before you. What are you, and what is this world? do you forget that He is the all-powerful and terrible God, the God of the deluge, the God who destroyed Sodom in his wrath? Now, it is easy to see that by your present conduct you do not honour to his name. Has not God said: *They that take the sword shall perish with the sword?* and Saint Paul: *Bender, therefore, honour to whom honour is due.* How can you, after reading these precepts, still pretend that you are acting according to the gospel? Beware, beware, lest a terrible judgment fall upon you!

“ But say you, authority is wicked, cruel, intolerable; it will not allow us the gospel, it overwhelms us with burdens beyond all reason or endurance; it ruins us, soul and body. To this I reply, that the wickedness and injustice of authority are no warrant for revolt, seeing that it befits not all men indiscriminately to take upon themselves the punishment of wickedness. Besides which, the natural law says that no man shall be the judge in his own cause, nor revenge his own quarrel. The divine law teaches us the same lesson: *Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay.* Your enterprise, therefore, is not only wrong according to Bible and gospel law, but it is opposed also to natural law and to equity; and you cannot properly persevere in it, unless you prove that you are called to it by a new commandment of God, especially directed to you, and confirmed by miracles.

“ You see the mote in the eye of authority, but you see not the beam in your own. Authority is unjust, in that it interdicts the Gospel, and oppresses you with burdens; but you are still more in the wrong even than authority, you who, not content with interdicting the Word of God, trample it under foot, and arrogate to yourselves the power reserved to God alone. Which (I refer the decision of the question to

yourselves) which is the greatest robber: he who takes a part, or he who takes the whole? Now authority, it is not to be denied, unjustly deprives you of your property, but you seek to deprive authority, not only of property, but also of body and of life. You say, indeed, that you will leave it something; but who will believe you? You aim to take from it power; he who takes all, does not hesitate, at will, to take also the part; when the wolf eats the sheep, he eats the ears also.

“Do you not perceive, my friends, that if your doctrine were tenable, there would remain upon the earth neither authority, nor order, nor any species of justice. Every man would act entirely as his own judge, his own vindicator, and nought would be seen but murder, rapine, and desolation.

“What would you do, if, of your own body, each member insisted upon his independence of the rest, administered his own justice, revenged his own quarrel? Would you permit this? Would you not say that it was for the leaders, for the superiors to judge of the matter?

“This is the law upon which even the Pagans, Turks, and Jews must act, who desire to maintain peace and order among them. So far, then, from being Christians, you would act worse than Heathens and Turks! What will Jesus Christ say, on seeing his name thus profaned?

“Dear friends, as I have said, Satan has sent among you certain prophets of murder, who aim at rule in this world, and think to achieve it by your means, without heeding for a moment the spiritual and temporal dangers into which they are hurling you.

“Let us pass on to the question of gospel law, a law which does not bind the heathen, as does the law of which we have just spoken. Jesus Christ, from whom you derive your title of Christians, says, in the gospel of St. Matthew, chap. V., *Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.* Hear you that, assembled Christians? Now, I ask you, does your conduct answer to this precept? If you cannot suffer as our Lord calls upon you to suffer, at once lay aside his name, of which you are not worthy, or he himself will come in anger and tear it from you. *Love your enemies, says Jesus Christ, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.* Suffer the

cross! Suffer the cross! That is the law taught you by Christ—the Law of laws! Yet, how do you obey that law? Oh, my friends, if you do these things, how can you fulfil the precept which commands you to love your enemies, and to do good unto them. . . Oh! would to God that the most of us, if nothing else, were at least good and pious pagans, who observed faithfully the natural law!

“In order to show you to what an extent your prophets have led you astray, I have only to recal to you one or two examples which manifest what the law of the gospel is. Consider Jesus Christ and St. Peter in the garden of Gethsemane: you recollect that St. Peter thought he was doing a good action in defending his Lord and master against those who came to betray him and to deliver him over to the hands of the executioners. And yet, you know, Jesus Christ reprimanded him, as though he were a murderer, for having resisted with the sword, saying: *They who take the sword, shall perish with the sword.*

“Another example: when Jesus Christ himself was bound to the cross, what did he? Did he not pray for his persecutors? did he not say, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* You know that Jesus Christ, after he had gone through his mortal sufferings, was glorified; you know that his kingdom has prevailed and triumphed. In the same way God would aid you, if you would submit lowly and patiently to the long suffering he requires of you in this world.

“To take an example in the very times wherein we live: How, I ask you, has it happened that neither the emperor nor the pope has been able to effect anything against me? that the more strenuous the efforts they have made to arrest the progress of the gospel, and to destroy it, the more has the gospel gained ground and force. I have never drawn the sword; I have never taken a step towards revolt; I have always preached, always inculcated obedience to authority, even to the authority which was bitterly persecuting me; I always relied wholly upon God; I placed everything in his hands. It is for this reason, that, in despite of the pope and of the other tyrants, he has not only preserved my life, which is in itself a miracle, but he has also more and more advanced and spread my gospel; it is you yourselves, who, while you think you are serving the gospel, are in reality impeding it; you are giving it a terrible blow, you are destroying its effect in

the minds of men, you are crushing it by your perverse and insane enterprise.

— “I say all this unto you, my dear friends, that you may see to what an extent you are profaning the name of Christ and of his holy law; however just your demands may be, it befits not a Christian to draw the sword, or to employ violence; you should rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded, according to the law which has been given unto you (1 Corinthians, vi.), At all events, if you persist in carrying out the dictates of a perverse will, desecrate not the name of Christ, nor impiously make use of it as a pretext and cloak for your unrighteous conduct. I will not permit you to do so; I will not excuse it; I will wrest that name from you by any effort of which I am capable, sacrificing, if necessary, the last drop of blood in my veins. . .

“Not that I desire to justify authority; the wrongs it has committed are infinite, immense—I readily admit it; but what I desire is, that if, unhappily (which God forbid), if, unhappily, I say, you should come to blows, what I desire is, that neither the one nor the other of you presume to call yourselves Christians. It will be a war of pagans, and nothing else; for Christians fight not with swords or arquebuses, but with the cross and with patience, after the example of their general, Jesus Christ, who handled not the sword, but unresistingly suffered himself to be bound to the cross. Their triumph consists not in domination and power, but in submission and humility. The arms of our chivalry are of no corporeal efficacy; their force is in the Almighty.

“Entitle yourselves, therefore: men who follow nature, and will not endure evil; that is the name which befits you. If you do not assume it, but persist in retaining and incessantly pronouncing the name of Christian, I can regard you in no other light than that of enemies, equally with the pope and with the emperor, to myself and to the gospel. I would have you know, that, in this case, it is my determination to throw myself, in all confidingness, at the feet of God, and to implore him to enlighten your minds, and to save your souls, by taking part against you in this matter, so as to cause your enterprise to fail.

“I will risk my head herein, as I have already done in my resistance to the emperor and to the pope; for I see very

clearly that the devil, not having been able to get the better of me by their means, aims at exterminating and devouring me by means of the prophets of murder, who are among you. Well, let him devour me: he will find me not very easy to digest.

“ But, dear friends, I entreat you humbly, and in a spirit of sincere friendship, as one who wishes you well here and hereafter, to pause before you proceed further in this matter, to reflect most earnestly upon your real interests, and as the fruit of your reflection, to relieve me from the painful duty of fighting by prayer against you; for, though I am myself but a poor sinner, yet I know that, in this case, reason is so clearly on my side, that God would infallibly listen to my solicitations. He himself has taught us in the Lord's Prayer to say: *Hallowed be thy name on earth as it is in heaven.* It is impossible that in your hearts you should feel confidence in God, for the gospel and your own consciences alike condemn you—alike tell you that you are acting as heathens, as enemies of the gospel. If you were Christians, you would not resort to the sword, or to violence of any kind; but you would humbly pray, *Thy will be done*; and, *Deliver us from evil.* You yourselves set up to be your own God, your own Saviour; the true God, the true Saviour, then, have abandoned you.

“ The demands you have drawn up, are not in themselves contrary to natural law and to equity, but they are rendered so by the violence with which you seek to force them from the hands of authority; so, too, he who prepared them is not a pious and sincere man; he has cited a great number of chapters of the gospel, without giving the verses themselves, which he has done for the purpose of seducing you, and involving you in danger by specious appearances, without enabling you from the text itself to confute him.)

“ For I will tell you that when we come to read the chapters he has indicated, so far from their telling in favour of your enterprise, they are, on the contrary, against you; for they inculcate that all men should live and act as becomes Christians. He who has thus essayed to attack the gospel by your means, is assuredly a prophet of sedition and of murder; but God will resist him, and preserve you from him.

“ In the first place, you glorify yourselves in your preface,

for that you only ask to live according to the gospel. But do you not yourselves admit that you are in revolt? How then, I ask you, can you have the audacity to cloak such conduct under the holy name of the gospel?

“You cite the example of the children of Israel. You say that God heard the cries which they sent up unto him, and delivered them from the hands of their enemies. Why then do you not follow the example which you so complacently quote? Invoke God as they did, and wait in humble patience until he sends you also a Moses, who shall prove his mission by miracles. The children of Israel did not rise in insurrection against Pharaoh; they sought not to help themselves, as you seek to do. The example, therefore, which you quote, is directly against you, condemning your case, instead of establishing it.

“Nor is it true that your articles do, as you announce in your preface, teach the gospel; nor is it true that they are conformable with it. Is there any one of the twelve founded upon evangelical doctrine? On the contrary, is not the sole object of them all the temporal emancipation of your persons and your property? Have they not all reference to temporal things? You covet power, and the goods of the earth; you are unwilling to endure any wrong. The gospel, on the contrary, has no heed to these things, and constitutes the external life of Christians of suffering, of enduring injustice, of submitting to be defrauded, of bearing the cross, of patience, of contempt of life and of all the things of this world.

“It is absolutely essential, then, that you should either abandon your enterprise, and consent to endure the wrongs that men may do unto you, if you desire still to bear the name of Christians; or else, if you persist in your resolutions, that you should throw aside that name, and assume some other. Choose one or the other of these alternatives: there is no medium.

“You say that your tyrants prevent the gospel from coming unto you. I tell you that there is no power, either on earth or in heaven, which can do that. A public doctrine makes its progress free and unconstrained beneath the wide vault of heaven. It is limited to no place, any more than the bright star, which, traversing the air, announced to the wise men of

the east the birth of Christ. . . . If the gospel is interdicted in the town or village in which you happen to be, follow it to the town or village where it is preached. . . . Jesus Christ has said (Matthew x. 23), *When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another*. He does not say, if they persecute you in one town, remain there, gather yourselves together against the lords in the name of the gospel, and make yourselves masters of the place.

“What! shall persons calling themselves Christians, dare to become, in the name of the gospel, thieves and robbers? Shall such men presume to entitle themselves followers of the gospel?”

“Answer to Article 1.—If authority will not support a pastor who is agreeable to the feelings of a particular parish, the parish should support him at its own expense. If authority will not permit this pastor to preach, the faithful should follow him elsewhere.

“Answer to Article 2.—You seek to dispose of a tithe which does not belong to you; this would be a spoliation and robbery. If you wish to do good, let it be with your own money, and not with that of other people. God himself has told us that he despises an offering which is the product of theft.

“Answer to Article 3.—You wish to apply to the flesh the Christian liberty taught by the gospel, but I would ask you did not Abraham and the other patriarchs, as well as the prophets, keep bondmen? St. Paul himself tells us that the empire of this world cannot subsist without an inequality of persons.

“Answer to the eight last Articles.—As to your propositions respecting game, wood, feudal services, assessment of payments, &c., I refer these matters to the lawyers; I am not called upon to decide respecting them; but I repeat to you that the Christian is a martyr, and that he has no care for all these things; cease, then, to speak of the Christian law, and say rather that it is the human law, the natural law that you assert, for the Christian law commands you to suffer as to all these things, and to make your complaint to God alone.

“Dear friends, this is the monition and reply I have to give you, in answer to the demand you put to me. God

grant that you may be faithful to your promise, to be guided in all your proceedings by the gospel! Do not cry out unreflectingly and hastily: Luther is a flatterer of princes, he speaks against the gospel; read calmly what I have written, and see whether it is not all based on the Word of God.

“Exhortation to both parties:—Since, then, my friends, neither the one nor the other of you are defending a Christian thing, but are both acting equally against God, abandon, I beseech you, all notion of violence. If you do not, you will cover Germany with horrible carnage, with disorder that will have no end. For as you are equally committing injustice, you will mutually ruin each other, and God will punish your wickedness by your own hands.

“You, lords, have against you Scripture and history; both teach you that tyranny has always been punished. You yourselves are tyrants and hangmen; you prohibit the gospel, and you can, if you persevere, have no hope of escaping the fate which has hitherto ever befallen men like you. Behold the empires of the Assyrians, of the Persians, of the Greeks, of the Romans,—all these have perished by the sword, because they rose by the sword. God has ever shown, in regard to all such dominations, that it is he who is the supreme judge and ruler of the earth, and that he will suffer no injustice to remain unpunished.

“You, peasants, have also against you Scripture and history. Never has revolt been truly successful or prosperous in its results, for God has ever provided for the strict fulfilment of his Word: *He that takes up the sword, shall perish by the sword.* Even though you were to triumph over the nobles, you, the conquerors of the nobles, would speedily tear one another to pieces like wild beasts. The spirit not ruling over you, but only the flesh and the blood, God would not delay to send among you an evil spirit, a destroying spirit, as he did to Sichem and its king.

“I am filled with anguish and pity when I reflect upon two inevitable calamities that are about to befall both parties: would to God I could avert them, by the sacrifice of my own life! In the first place, seeing that you both fight in an unrighteous cause, it is perfectly certain that all of you who shall perish in the struggle will be eternally lost, body and soul, for you will die in your sins without repentance, without

the succour of divine grace. The other calamity I foresee, with tearful eyes and bursting heart, is, that Germany will become a prey to devastation; for once such a carnage as is now threatened shall begin, it can hardly terminate until all parties are involved in the destruction. It is very easy to begin the battle, but it will not be in our power to put a stop to it, when once begun. Madmen! What have the old men, the women, and children, whom you will drag down with you into destruction—what have they done to you, that you should fill the country with blood and rapine, that you should make so many widows and orphans?

“ Oh, this is a glorious, a joyful sight for the enemy of man! Satan must shout aloud with self-gratulation when he sees God thus terribly angry with us, thus menacing to overwhelm us with his wrath. Take heed, take heed, dear friends! you are all involved in the danger. I cannot think that, upon reflection, you will persist in damning yourselves eternally, and leaving behind you, in this world, a bleeding and burning country.

“ My earnest counsel is, that you choose from among the nobles a certain number of counts and barons, and from among the commonalty an equal number of representatives, and that you leave it to these to arrange matters upon an amicable footing. You, lords, if you listen to me, will lay aside that insulting haughtiness which you have hitherto exhibited, but which you must, sooner or later, renounce, whether you choose or no; you will mitigate your tyranny, so that the poor man may at last enjoy a little ease and comfort. You, peasants, if you listen to me, will, on your part, make some concessions, will relinquish such of your articles as shall be considered to go too far. In this way, the matter, though not arranged according to the strict letter of the Gospel, will at least be accommodated consistently with human law.

“ If you will not follow this my counsel (I pray God you may), I cannot prevent you from proceeding to open hostilities, but at least I shall be guiltless of the destruction of your goods, your lives, your souls. The burden of your sins will rest wholly upon yourselves. It will be, as I have said, not a fight of Christians against Christians, but of tyrants and oppressors against robbers and profaners of the name of the

gospel. They who perish in this struggle, will assuredly be eternally damned. For me, I shall now content myself with praying, together with my people, that God will prevent you from carrying out your unchristian purposes. I cannot but confess, however, that the terrible signs which have manifested themselves of late, in heaven and on the earth, have grievously afflicted my soul, and filled it with fear that the anger of the Lord has been too awfully aroused against us, and that he has said, as he said of others, in Jeremiah: *Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people.* God grant, however, that fearing his anger, you may repent and amend yourselves, so as at least to put off the evil day. These are the counsels which, as a brother and a Christian, I offer you in all sincerity, as my conscience testifies for me; God in his mercy permit that they bear good fruit. Amen!"¹

The biographical character of this work, and the limits within which we are necessitated to confine ourselves, will not permit us to enter into the history of the German *Jacquerie* which now broke out. A few particulars respecting it will be found in the Appendix; here we shall content ourselves with giving the sanguinary proclamation of Dr. Thomas Munzer, chief of the insurgent peasants of Thuringia; it presents a singular contrast with the tone of gentleness and moderation which breathes throughout the Twelve Articles we have just cited. It runs thus:

"The true fear of God before all things. Dear brothers, how long will you sleep? Will you always continue in this disobedience to the will of God, because, blind-souled that you are, you think yourselves abandoned of him? How many times have I not already repeated to you my words of warning and of instruction? How many more times shall I have to repeat them? God will not, cannot reveal himself to you any more, disobedient as you are. Brothers, you must throw off this lukewarmness, you must stand forward firm and bold, or the sacrifice and the sufferings will all have been in vain; and you yourselves will begin to suffer then, again and worse than ever; this I predict to you. We must either suffer in the cause of God, or become the martyrs of the devil.

¹ Werke, ii. 86.

“ Stand fast, then, resist, throw off this fatal fear and lethargy, cease to flatter the dreamers who have gone astray from the right path, and the impious reprobates who have never sought it. Arise, and fight the fight of the Lord! Make your brethren respect the testimony of God, or you will all miserably perish. Germany, France, Italy, have arisen in their strength; the Master, at length, wills to play his own game; the hour of the wicked is come.

“ At Fulda, in Holy-week, four churches were sacked; the peasants of Klegen in Hegau, and those of the Black Forest, have risen, to the number of three thousand, and their number increases every day. All my apprehension is, least these heedless men should listen to some delusive compact, to the disastrous consequences of which they are blind. You are as yet but three thousand, it is true, but confiding in God, and vindicating his honour and glory, a hundred thousand enemies ought not to inspire you with a moment's fear.

“ On—on—on! now is the time! the wicked tremble when they hear of you. Be pitiless, though Esau should give you fine words (Genesis, xxxiii.); heed not the groans of the impious ones; they will implore you with tender supplications, they will weep like children, but be not affected with their tears or their groans; God forbid Moses to show mercy (Deut. vii.), and he has revealed to us the same prohibition. Rouse up the towns and villages; above all, rouse up the miners of the mountains!

“ On! on! on! on while the fire is burning—on while the hot sword is yet reeking with the slaughter! Give the fire no time to go out, the sword no time to cool. Kill all the haughty ones; while one of them remains alive, you will not be freed from the fear of man. While they reign over you, it is fruitless to speak of God.

“ On! on! on! on while there is yet daylight. God marches on at your head; follow him firmly. The whole of this history is written and explained in St. Matthew, chapter xxiv. Fear not: God is with us, as it is written there, chapter ii., verse 2. God tells you to fear nothing. Be not intimidated by numbers. It is not your battle, but the battle of the Lord; it is he who fights, not you. Be bold, and you will receive the help of the Most High. Amen. Given at Mulhausen, 1525.—Thomas Munzer, servant of God against the wicked.”

In a letter to the elector Frederic, and to duke John, Luther institutes a comparison between himself and Munzer: “. . . . I am but a poor man; I commenced my undertaking in fear and trembling; St. Paul did the same, as he himself confesses, Corinthians i., 3—6; yet he could truly boast of having heard a celestial voice. I hear no such voices, and I am not supported by the Spirit. With what humble reserve did I attack the pope in the first instance! How terrible were the struggles I had with myself! What earnest prayers did I offer up to God for aid and enlightenment! My very first writing proves all this. Yet with this poor spirit of mine, I did that which the terrible world-cracker yonder,¹ who, from his lofty position, scarce looks down upon us poor insects, I did that which he is afraid to do; I disputed at Leipsig, in the midst of a population altogether hostile to me; I appeared at Augsburg before my greatest enemy; I appeared at Worms, before the emperor and all the states of the empire, though I knew that my safeguard had been violated, and that snares and treachery awaited me.

“ Poor and weak as I then was, my heart told me that I ought to repair to Worms, even though there were as many devils in it as there were tiles on the house-tops It was necessary, I felt, to dispute incessantly, against one, two, three, against as many as presented themselves, and in whatever method they might impose upon me. Weak and poor of mind, I was left to myself, like the flower of the field; I could select neither the adversary, nor the time, nor the place, nor the manner of the attack, nor its matter; I had to hold myself in readiness to answer all men that might assail me, or my doctrines and the true Word.

“ But this wonderful spirit who has exalted himself as far above all of us as the sun is above the earth, who scarcely deigns to look down upon us poor worms and insects, he, forsooth, before he speaks, requires that the assembly he is to address shall be all favourable to his views, trusty adherents from whom no opposition, no doubt, is to be apprehended; resolutely refusing to hold any conference apart, with two or three disputants, who are not disposed to agree implicitly in

¹ Munzer, who had refused to engage in any controversy, or in any assembly, which was not favourable to his views.

his opinions We have no strength but that which Jesus Christ gives us; if we are left to ourselves, the sound of a falling leaf will make us tremble; but if He sustains us, our spirit is strong in his power and glory I am constrained at times to say more of myself, and more boastingly than I would wish, but St. Paul was also constrained to do so (Corinthians, ii. 11—16); I should be very willing to abstain from it, but I cannot, until these spirits of mischief and lying are effectually dispersed.”¹

Immediately after the defeat of the insurgent peasants, Melancthon published a brief history of Munzer. It is needless, perhaps, to add, that this narrative is altogether unfavourable to its subject. The author informs us that Munzer, having fled from the battle-field, so fatal to him, of Frankenhäusen, concealed himself in a bed in a neighbouring cottage, and bound up his head, as though he were suffering from some malady, but a horseman of the opposite party, who came to the cottage, detected him by a paper in his portmanteau.

“ While they were handcuffing him, he cried out several times, whereupon duke George, who had come up on hearing news of his arrest, said to him, ‘ Thou sufferest, Thomas; but the poor people suffered more who, led astray by thy persuasions, appeared in arms this day against authority, and have met their death at our hands.’ ‘ They desired no other,’ replied Thomas, with a loud laugh of a peculiar kind, which gave those present the idea that he was possessed of a devil.”

On his trial, Munzer stated that the reformation of religion had long occupied his thoughts, and that he had availed himself of the insurrection of the peasants of Suabia as a favourable occasion for carrying his views on the subject into effect.

“ On the approach of his last moments, he exhibited the most miserable pusillanimity; he was, indeed, so utterly stunned and overwhelmed with fear, that he could not even repeat the Belief. Duke Henry of Brunswick accordingly said it to him, and he followed the duke, paragraph by paragraph. He publicly admitted that he had been in the wrong,

¹ Werke, ii. 406.

but at the same time he exhorted the princes to be kinder and gentler towards the people, and to study the book of Kings; adding, that if they followed this advice, they need fear no repetition of the recent disorders. His head having been cut off, it was stuck at the end of a pike, and left exposed to public view for some time, as a warning to others."

A little while before his execution, he wrote to the inhabitants of Mulhausen, recommending his wife and children to their care, and entreating that none would visit his offences upon his family. In the same letter, he said: "Before I quit this world, I feel it my duty earnestly to exhort you all never again to have recourse to violence or revolt; strictly to avoid any further effusion of blood."

But whatever may have been the atrocities with which Munzer and the peasantry disgraced their struggle, one cannot but feel surprised at the harsh manner in which Luther speaks of them after their defeat. He could not at all get over the fact that their conduct had compromised the name of the Reformation "Miserable spirits of confusion! where are now the words with which you excited and aroused the poor misguided folk? When you told them they were the people of God; that God was fighting for them; that any one of them was able to cope with a hundred of the enemy; that with one sweep of a hat they could kill five adversaries; that the stones shot from the arquebuses against them, would turn against and destroy those who had discharged them? Where now is Munzer, with that great sleeve of his, in which he was to catch any weapon that should be hurled against his people? What God is that who for the last twelve months, has been prophesying by the mouth of Munzer?"

"I think that all the peasants should perish, rather than the princes and magistrates, because the peasants have taken up the sword without divine authority. . . . No mercy, no toleration, is due to the peasants; on them should fall the wrath of God and of man." (30th May, 1525.) "The peasants are under the ban of God and of the emperor, and may be treated as mad dogs." In a letter of the 21st June, he enumerates the horrible massacres which had been committed by the nobles, without giving the least indication of sympathy with the fate of the victims.¹

¹ See Appendix XXXIII.

He displayed more magnanimity with reference to his personal enemy Carlstadt, who was at this juncture exposed to very great danger, finding it very difficult, when called upon, to justify his conduct in having taught doctrines analogous to those of Munzer. He returned to Wittemberg, and humbled himself to Luther. The latter interposed in his favour, and obtained from the elector for Carlstadt the permission he had solicited, to establish himself as an agricultural labourer at Kemberg.

“ I feel great commiseration for the poor man, and your grace need not be reminded that you should be kind and merciful towards the unfortunate, especially when they are not guilty in a moral point of view.” (12th Sept. 1525.)

On the 22nd November, 1525, he writes again in these terms:—“ Dr. Carlstadt has urgently entreated me to intercede with your electoral grace, that he may be allowed to inhabit the town of Kemberg; for he finds that the residence in a mere village is rendered disagreeable to him, and even dangerous, by the ill-will of the peasantry. Now, as he has kept himself quiet so far, and as, moreover, the provost of Kemberg can watch his proceedings for the future, I humbly beseech your electoral grace to comply with his request. I admit that your grace has already done a great deal for him, and that you have even involved yourself in calumny and suspicion on his account, but God will amply repay you for all these things. As to the salvation of Carlstadt’s soul, that is his affair, and I trust he will see to it; in the meantime, he has immediate need of being put in a way to gain his livelihood; and I think we should do this for him.”

“ To all dear Christians whom this writing shall reach, Dr. Martin Luther wishes the grace and peace of God the Father and of his Son Jesus Christ. Dr. Andrew Carlstadt has just sent me a manuscript, wherein he exculpates himself from the charge of having been one of the chiefs in the late rebellion, and he earnestly prays that I would cause this manuscript to be printed, in order to preserve the honour of his name, and perhaps even his life, which he finds in peril at the present moment, owing to the precipitancy with which they are proceeding against accused persons. It is, in point of fact, generally rumoured that authority is about to prosecute many poor people, and in such a

spirit of blind anger that it is possible many innocent persons will suffer with the guilty, being allowed no time wherein to defend themselves from the charges brought against them; and I am inclined to believe the rumour, convinced as I am that the cowardly tyrants who of late trembled at the falling of a leaf, are now so insolently puffed up with their success, that they will go on glutting their cruelty until the appointed day when God shall throw them down in their turn.

“ Now, though doctor Carlstadt is my greatest enemy in questions of doctrine, and though there is no chance or hope of our coming to a reconciliation on these points; the confidence which has inspired him to have recourse to me in his hours of peril, rather than to his pseudo-friends, who heretofore animated him against me, that confidence, I say, shall not be deceived, and I will render him this service, and any other that may be in my power.”¹

Luther then proceeds to express his opinion that, by the grace of God, all may yet turn out well with regard to Carlstadt, and that he will ultimately renounce his errors touching the sacrament. At the same time, he protests against the possible conclusions of those who may judge, from the course he takes in this matter, that he yields in the slightest degree any one of his points of doctrine. As to those who may accuse him of an excess of credulity, he replies by anticipation: “ It befits neither myself nor any man to judge of the hearts of others. Charity is not suspicious; *Charity*, says St. Paul, *is long-suffering, and kind, and envieth not.*

“ This, then, is my view of the case: as doctor Carlstadt offers to submit himself to a fair trial, and to undergo merited punishment if he can be shown to have taken part in the rebellion, I am bound to credit his word and his book, though, I confess, I had before felt disposed to believe him, in common with many others, animated with a spirit of sedition. But, under the altered aspect of his case, it is my duty to obtain for him the inquiry he solicits.”

Further on, Luther charges the greater share of responsibility for the calamities which had lately befallen Germany,

¹ Werke, ii. 59

upon the violence with which the princes and bishops had resisted the introduction of religious freedom. "Hence, among the people, has arisen that fury which, naturally enough will not abate until their tyrants are thrown down into the mud; that state of things cannot go on for ever, wherein the master's only idea is to inspire those under him with fear, instead of seeking to engage their affections also.

"Let our priestlings and our lordlings still keep their ears fast shut against all warnings; let them go on, let them have their swing for awhile; let them continue for awhile to throw upon the gospel the blame of the evil which they have brought upon themselves; let them mock the Word; ere long Another will come, who will say: 'I will have no prince nor bishop remain on the earth.' These men will very speedily find that which they have been so long seeking; the matter is in train. God grant they may repent in time, ere the thunderbolt strikes them! Amen."

".... I entreat the nobles, and the bishops, and all concerned, to allow Carlstadt to defend himself, since he assures us so solemnly he can exculpate himself from his alleged share in the rebellion, least God should become still more angry with us for our injustice, and the anger of the people be furiously, and with greater reason, aroused against authority. He who has promised to hear the cry of the oppressed, has never lied to us; and as he has the will to punish wrong-doers, so he has the power. May he grant us his grace! Amen." (1525.)¹

"Germany is lost, I fear; she must, indeed, needs perish, since her princes will employ only the sword. Ah! they think they can thus pull out, hair by hair, the beard of the Great God. He will smite them, he will smite them!" (1526.)

"The minds of these tyrants are full of impotent malice, of cowardly malignity, of thoughts utterly opposed to honesty and honour. It is they, and not the people, who deserve to be slaves. Thank God, as far as I am concerned, I am sufficiently revenged for all they have done me, or can do me, in the thorough contempt I have for them and for Satan, their God." (Dec. 1525.)

¹ See Appendix XXXIV.

CHAPTER IV.

1524—1527.

Attacks of the rationalists upon Luther—Zwinglius,
Bucer, &c.—Erasmus.

DURING the terrible tragedy of the peasants' war, the theological war upon Luther continued almost without intermission. The reformers of Switzerland and of the Rhine—Zwinglius, Bucer, Œcolampadius,—fully participated in the theological principles of Carlstadt, differing from him only in their submission to the civil authority. In all other respects, not one of them was prepared to remain within the limits which Luther had assigned to the Reformation. Cold, unbending logicians, they, bit by bit, sternly demolished what he had sought to preserve of the old poetry of Christianity. Less daring than they, but infinitely more dangerous, the king of the men of letters of that period, the phlegmatic but infinitely spiritual Erasmus, dealt doctor Martin, from time to time, some terrible blows.

It was long the great object with Zwinglius and Bucer,¹ men of great political capacity, to preserve, at all events, the apparent unity of protestantism. Bucer, *the great architect of subtleties*, as Bossuet calls him, concealed his opinions for a considerable period from Luther, and even executed the translation of his German works. "There is no one," says doctor Martin, "who has turned my writings into Latin with greater ability and exactitude than Bucer. He has mixed up with them none of his absurdities about the sacrament. I could not show my heart and thought better in words than he has done."²

A closer examination, however, showed him the infidelity

¹ The learned men of the 16th century were wont to translate their vernacular names into Greek. Thus Kubhorn (Cow-horn) became Bucer; Hauschein (domestic light), Œcolampadius; Didier (*desiderium*, desire.) Erasmus; Schwartz-Erde (black-earth), Melancthon, &c. Luther and Zwinglius, the two popular reformers, alone retained their family appellations.

² Tischreden, 425

of the translation. On 13th Sept. 1527, he writes to a printer to warn him that Bucer, in turning his works into Latin, had so altered certain passages as to make him say just the reverse of what he had said; and he earnestly requests his correspondent, in the event of his reprinting the volume in which these alterations by Bucer occurred, to intimate the fact to the public in a preface. In 1527, Luther attacked Zwinglius and Ecolampadius in a book, wherein he designated them new Wickliffites, and denounced their opinions as dangerous and sacrilegious.¹

In 1528, we find him saying, with reference to Bucer: "I know too well the wickedness of Bucer to be at all astonished at his turning against myself what I have written for the sacrament.² Christ guard thee, poor Luther, surrounded as thou art with these wild beasts, these vipers, these lionesses, these panthers, far more in danger than was Daniel in the lion's den."

"Zwinglius I regard as having drawn down upon himself the just hatred of all good men, by his daring and criminal manner of treating the word of God." (27th Oct. 1527.)

"What a fellow is this Zwinglius! Ignorant as a block of grammar, and logic, and every other science." (28th Nov. 1527.)

In a second book he published against them in 1528, he says: "I reject and condemn, as unmixed error, all doctrine that proceeds upon the principle of free will." This was his grand quarrel with Erasmus. It had commenced in the year 1525, when Erasmus published his book, *De Libero Arbitrio*. Up to that period, the two men had been on terms of friendship. Erasmus had several times taken up the defence of Luther; and the latter, in return, had consented to respect Erasmus' neutrality on other points. The following letter will show that, in 1524, Luther still felt it necessary to observe some circumspection with reference to the powerful writer of Rotterdam.

"I have remained silent long enough, dear Erasmus; I have waited month after month, in the expectation that you, as being the greater man of the two, would be the first to renew our correspondence; as you have not done so, charity commands me to set you the example. I do not reproach you with

having kept apart from us, knowing that your wish was not to complicate or embarrass the cause you were maintaining against our enemies the papists. My only vexation is, that in the books you have published, you have, in several places, in order to conciliate their favour or mitigate their fury, dealt us sundry sharp side blows and cuts, which we had no reason to expect at your hands. We have seen, clearly enough, that the Lord has not seen fit to bestow on you, as yet, the energy and the direction of mind necessary to enable you to attack these monsters roundly and boldly; and we are not men to require from you efforts beyond your present strength. We have respected in you the will of God, who has meted out to you, in this respect, but limited gifts. On the other hand, there is no one can deny that it is you who have mainly contributed to the flourishing rise of letters we have witnessed, and which gives so powerful an assistance to the right understanding of Scripture; the powers which God has granted to you in this respect, are great, admirable, magnificent, and heartily do we thank him for bestowing them upon you. Impressed with these feelings, I have never desired to see you step beyond the limits assigned you by Providence, and come over to our camp; you would render us great services there, doubtless, with your rare intellect and your fine eloquence; but since your heart falls short of the requisite degree of confidence, it is better you should serve us in your own way. My great fear has been least you should be induced, by the seductions of our enemies, to write against our dogmas, in which case I should have been compelled, though most unwillingly, to oppose you, face to face. As it is, I have had great difficulty in persuading some of our people to lay aside books they had written for the purpose of drawing you into the arena. I was deeply pained, influenced as I have throughout been by these views, when I saw Hutten's *Expostulatio* published, and still more so when I read your *Sponge for Hutten*. If you will reflect upon this production, you must admit that, however easy it may be to write lectures recommending moderation, and to charge Luther with intemperance of language and manner, it is difficult, nay impossible, to practise these lessons of yours, unless one is singularly favoured by Providence. Believe it or not, as you will, but Christ is my witness, I pity you from the bottom of my soul, when I

see you exciting by your conduct so formidable a body of enemies, whose indignation and hatred cannot be matters of indifference to a mind constituted as yours is, so susceptible of human weakness. Yet, at the same time, I am not at all prepared to say that the anger entertained against you by our people, is not the result of a perfectly legitimate zeal, deeming, as they do, that your attacks upon them have been wholly unwarrantable and unprovoked. . . . For myself, I am, I admit, irritable, and often led away, under the impulse of indignation, to write with greater bitterness than I myself approve of upon reflection, but I have never yielded to such intemperance, except in the case of persons whom I deemed perversely obstinate. Gentleness and kindness towards all others, however wicked and foolish they might be, it has always been my care to observe; and my own conscience and the experience of many persons, fully bear me out in the assertion. In the same way, despite all your side blows at us, I have restrained my pen, and have promised I will restrain it, until you openly declared yourself against us, which I hope may not happen. For though we differ wholly on many subjects, though I am deeply pained to observe the manner in which you express your opinions, your doubts and disapprobation, on some of the most material points of religion, I cannot, and will not, charge you with what I deem perverse stubbornness.¹ But what am I to do? On both sides, the feeling is one of a very bitter character. For my own part, if I could be admitted to mediate, I would have our people cease from attacking you, and allow your old age to go to rest peacefully in the Lord. They would do so, I am persuaded, if they would once take into proper consideration your advanced years, and the greatness of the cause they are fighting for, and which you should not be blamed for not appreciating, seeing that its comprehension is above your grasp. They should bear in mind that things with us have attained such a position, that our cause would be but very slightly endangered, even though Erasmus were to concentrate against it the entire amount of his intellectual strength. . . . Yet it is quite intelligible that our people should feel sore at your attacks upon them, knowing, as we all do, what an influence the bare name of Erasmus exercises over mankind, how great his authority is as against any adver-

sary; to have one bite from Erasmus, is worse than being assailed at once by the whole world of papists put together. I admit this, dear Erasmus, as a proof of the candour I desire to observe towards you, and because I would have God inspire you with a moral mind worthy of your exalted intellectual fame. If He should not send you, heart and soul, amongst us, at least let me entreat of you, that you remain a silent spectator of our tragedy. Do not join your forces with those of our adversaries; publish no books against me, and I will publish none against you. As to those who complain that they are attacked in the name of Luther, remember that they are men like you and me, to whom we must grant indulgence and pardon; and that, as St. Paul says, we should *bear one another's burdens*. The mutual biting and snarling I have deprecated is quite bad enough; but let us, at all events, refrain from absolutely devouring each other." (April, 1524.)

To Borner, our reformer writes thus: "Erasmus knows less about predestination than even the Sophists of the school did. He is in no degree formidable as to this matter, any more than he is on the other questions of Christian doctrine. I shall take care, however, not to assail or exasperate master Erasmus; and even though he should assail me once, nay twice, I would not answer him; for it would be very imprudent just now to bring him down upon us, with all the immense power of his eloquence. . . . Still, should the necessity arise, I shall take my stand in all firmness and confidence, face to face, even with the most eloquent Erasmus. I know myself to be a mere child in comparison with him; but, strong in the goodness of my cause, I care not for his credit, his name, his reputation. I have no ill-will to Mosellanus for attaching himself to Erasmus rather than to myself. Tell him from me he is at full liberty to be Erasmian all over." (28th May, 1522.)

It is evident that this state of things could not endure for any permanence; and, at length, the publication of the *De Libero Arbitrio* served as a regular declaration of war between the parties.¹ On its appearance, Luther at once admitted that the real question was now at last placed at issue.² "What I admire, what I praise in you, is that you alone

¹ See Appendix XXXVII.

² *Ib.*

have gone to the root of the matter, to that which is the question of questions—free will. You alone do not weary me with quarrels foreign to the point, about the pope, and purgatory, and indulgences, and other insipid affairs; you alone have laid hold of the knot of the thing—you have seized it by the throat. Thanks, Erasmus.

“It is irreligious, say you, superfluous, a mere effect of idle curiosity, to seek to know whether God is endowed with prescience; whether our will is active in that which relates to eternal salvation, or merely passively suffers the action of grace; whether, as to what we do of evil or good, we do it, or suffer it. . . . Great God! if such an inquiry as this be irreligious, be superfluous, be trifling, what inquiry on earth is there that can be characterized as religious, grave, or useful? Erasmus, Erasmus, you can hardly allege ignorance as the excuse for the mischievous fallacy you here advance. In a man of your age and experience, who has lived so long amongst a Christian people, who has so long considered and weighed the Holy Scriptures, such conduct is without excuse, and leaves you exposed to the just animadversion of all good men. 'Tis monstrous that you, a theologian—you, a Christian doctor, not content with your habitual scepticism, should thus come forward and publicly decide that things are altogether superfluous, without which there is no longer God, or Christ, or gospel, or faith, or any one of the elements, I will not say of Christianity, but of Judaism!”¹

It was to little purpose Luther put forth all his strength, all his eloquence; he could not burst the chains which circled him round about. “Why,” asks the cool, subtle Erasmus, “why does not God remove the vice of our will, since our will is not in our power; or why does he make us responsible, if the vice of the will is inherent in man. The vase says to the potter: why did you create me for eternal flames? If man is not free, what is the meaning of *precept, action, recompence*, of the whole circle of such expressions? What is the meaning of, *Turn ye from your sins?*”

Luther had great difficulty in answering Erasmus: “God,” says he, “speaks thus to us, solely for the purpose of convincing us that we are powerless, unless we implore His aid.

¹ See Appendix XXXIX.

Satan says: 'Thou mayest act.' Moses says: *Act*; in order, by practical proof, to convince us, against Satan, that we cannot act." An absurd, and, so to speak, cruel reply, as it appears to us, amounting to a proposition that people are to be bound, and that then a task-master is to say to them, *Walk!* in order practically to prove to them they cannot walk, and beat them, moreover, each time they helplessly fall. Retreating from before the consequences, which Erasmus draws or suggests, from his premises, Luther rejects all systems of interpretation of the Scriptures, though, at the same time, he himself is fain to have recourse to them, in order to escape from his adversary's conclusions. For instance, he explains, in the following manner, the *I will harden the heart of Pharaoh*: God does evil in us, that is to say, by us, not from any fault of his, but as the result of our own vices; for we are all sinners by nature, while God is incapable himself of doing aught but good. In virtue of his omnipotence, he draws us with him in his action; but, omnipotent as he is, all good as he is, he cannot help an evil instrument producing evil."

It must have been a subject of great exhilaration to Erasmus to see the triumphant opponent of popery painfully writhing under the blows which he inflicted upon him, and seizing, for the purpose of resistance, a weapon so dangerous to him who wielded it. The more Luther struggled, the greater his apparent advantage, the more did his victory involve him in perilous quagmires.¹ He plunged so deeply into immorality and fatalism, as to be compelled to admit that it was necessary for Judas to betray Christ. Luther, accordingly, retained a most bitter recollection of this dispute. He himself laboured under no delusion as to the real nature of what some called his triumph; he quite felt that the solution of the terrible problem was not furnished in his *De Servo Arbitrio*; and, until the latest day of his life, we find the name of him who had thus forced him on to the most immoral consequences of the doctrine of grace, mixed prominently up, in his writings and discourses, with his fiercest denunciations against the blasphemers of Christ.

He was more especially exasperated at the apparent mode-

¹ See Appendix XL.

ration of Erasmus, who, not daring to assail the edifice of Christianity at its base, seemed desirous of overturning it gradually, stone by stone. This manœuvring, this ambiguous method of proceeding did not at all suit Luther's straightforward energy.¹ "Erasmus," says he, "that amphibolous being, sitting calmly and unmoved on the throne of amphibology, cheats and deludes us by his double-meaning, covert phraseology, and claps his hands when he sees us involved in his insidious figures of speech, as a spider rejoices over a captured fly. Then, seeing the occasion arrived for the display of his rhetoric, he comes thundering down upon us, tearing us, flagellating us, crucifying us, throwing all hell at our heads, because we have, as he says, apprehended in a calumnious, infamous, and diabolical manner, words which, though he says not, he all the while meant we should understand in the sense wherein we have understood them. See him in another direction, crawling on like a viper to ensnare simple souls, after the manner of the serpent of old, which whispered in the ear of Mother Eve, and made her doubt the precepts of God." The quarrel, in point of fact, caused Luther, whatever he may say to the contrary, so much annoyance and embarrassment, that at last he refused to continue the discussion, and even forbade his people to take the matter up for him. "If I fight against mud, whether I get the better of it or no, I am all the same covered with mud, and so the best way is to let mud pass on."²

"I would not," he writes to his son John, "I would not for ten thousand florins ready money, take upon myself the peril in which Jerome, and still more Erasmus, will be, when they find themselves in the presence of Christ.

"If ever I get well and strong again, I will fully and publicly assert my God against Erasmus. I will not sell my dear Jesus. I am daily approaching the grave—nearer and nearer—and I am, therefore, anxious to lose no time in once more, and emphatically asserting my God in the face of all, against this bad man. Hitherto I have hesitated; I said to myself, if you kill him, what will happen? I killed

¹ See Appendix XLI.

² Hoc scio per certo, quod si cum stercore certo,
Vincio vel vincor, semper ego maculor.

Munzer, and his death at times weighs upon me, but I killed him because he sought to kill my Christ."¹

One Trinity Sunday, again, Dr. Martin said: "I entreat all you present, with whom the honour of Christ and the gospel is felt to be a serious matter—I pray you all to vow enmity to Erasmus."

On another occasion he said to Dr. Jonas and Dr. Pomegranus, with peculiar and manifestly heartfelt emphasis: "I recommend it to you as my last will, to be terrible and unflinching towards that serpent.—If I myself am restored to health, by God's help I will write against him and kill him. We have suffered him to insult us, and to take us by the throat; but now that he seeks to do so to Christ, we will array ourselves determinedly against him. It is true that to crush Erasmus is like crushing a bug, but he has mocked and insulted my Christ, and he shall be punished."

"If I live, I will, God aiding, purge the church of this vile creature. It is he who sowed and cultivated Crotus, Egranus, Witzeln, Æcolampadius, Campanus, and other visionaries and epicureans. He shall be expelled the church, I tell him."

On seeing a portrait of Erasmus, one day, Luther burst out—"That fellow, as his face manifestly proves, is full of trick and underhand malice—a very fox—a knave who has mocked God and religion. He makes use, indeed, of fine-sounding words: 'The dear Lord Christ, the Word of Salvation, the Holy Sacraments,' and so on, but as to the truth, he cares not a straw for it. When he preaches, it rings false, like a cracked pitcher. He once attacked Popery, and now he is trying to pull its head out of the mud."

CHAPTER V.

1526—1529.

Luther's marriage²—Poverty—Depression—Illness—Belief in the approaching end of the world.

THE strongest mind could not be expected to resist so many shocks, and Luther's had been visibly giving way ever since the crisis in the year 1525.

¹ Tischreden, 200.

² See Appendix XLII.

The part in which he had so long and so prominently appeared before the world, had been changed, and in a manner most painful to his own feelings. The opposition instituted by Erasmus was a clear manifestation of the estrangement from Luther of the men of letters, who had so powerfully aided his cause in the outset. This, in itself, had a very depressing effect; and the book, *De Libero Arbitrio*, was allowed to remain without any earnest answer. Again, the great innovator, the leader of the people against Rome, had since found himself left behind by the people, cursed by the people, in the war of the peasants. We need not, therefore, feel any surprise at the dejection of mind into which he fell at this period. As the intellectual man grew weaker, the empire of the flesh became stronger; and, yielding to its impulse, Luther married. The next two or three years are a sort of eclipse of the sun of Luther; whenever, during their course, we catch sight of him, we find him generally engaged in the material cares of life,¹ which, as may have been expected, did not serve to fill up the void in a mind like his. Accordingly, he, at last, gave way: a grand physical crisis marked the close of this period of atony.² He was aroused from his lethargy by the double danger of Germany—menaced from without by the arms of Soliman (1529), and within, as to its liberty and faith, by Charles V., at the diet of Augsburg. (1530.)

“Since from the very nature of woman as created by God, she necessarily requires the support and society of man, we need inquire no further: God is on our side: let us then honour marriage, as a thing honourable and divine.³”

“This mode of life was ordained by the Almighty from the very beginning of the world; he has been pleased to continue it from that time to the present, and he will glorify it to the last. Where were the kingdoms and empires of this earth, when Adam, when the patriarchs, their sons, and their daughters married and were given in marriage? From what other state of life does empire itself descend, from generation to generation? The wickedness of man has caused it to be necessary for the magistrate to take the institution of marriage under his control to a great extent; and has occa-

¹ See Appendix XLIII.

² *Ib.* XLIV.

³ *Ib.* XLIV.

sioned itself to become, as it were, an empire of war, but, in its early purity and simplicity, marriage was the empire of peace." (17th Jan., 1525.)

" You tell me, in your last letter, my dear Spalatin, that you are desirous of resigning your office and of retiring from the court. My advice is, that you remain there; unless, indeed, your intention, in retiring, is to marry. . . . For myself, I am in the hands of God, as a creature whose heart he may change and change again, whom he may kill or vivify at any hour, at any moment. Yet, in the state wherein my heart always has been, and still is, I shall not take a wife; not, God knows, that I have no consciousness of the flesh, not that I am a stock or a stone, but because my mind is not turned towards marriage at a period when every day I am in expectation of encountering torture and death as a heretic." (30th November, 1524.)

" Be not surprised that I do not marry, I who am *sic famosus amator*. And yet, perhaps, it is matter of wonder that one who has so constantly written in favour of marriage, and who has been so much in the society of women, should not himself, ere this, have been woman enough to marry. If you would regulate yourself by my example, here it is: I have had with me at one and the same time no fewer than three women, whom I loved and whom I should have liked to marry, but I have let two of them pass on and wed other husbands. The third is still with me, and I am holding on to her with my left hand; but, if I take not care, she too will escape me." (16th April, 1525.)

To Amsdorf he writes thus, on the 21st June, 1525: " I am a married man.¹ Hoping yet to live some time, I can no longer refuse to my father the desire he has so long expressed of leaving behind him a posterity through me. Moreover, I am anxious to be myself an example of what I have taught; and the more so, that many around me fail to practise that which is clearly commanded in the gospel. It is the will of God I follow in this matter; I do not feel towards my wife any burning passion, any lawless love, but simply affection."

The person whom Luther married was a young woman of noble family,² an escaped nun, twenty-four years old, and

¹ See Appendix XLVI.

² Ib. XLVII.

remarkably handsome. Her name was Catherine de Bora. It seems that she had previously been attached to Jerome Baumgärtner, a young doctor and senator of Nuremberg; for we find Luther writing to the latter on the 12th October, 1524: "If you are anxious to have your Ketha, come here at once, or she will become the property of another, who has already got her with him in his house. However, she has not as yet conquered her love for you; and, after all, I should be perhaps better pleased that you, having a prior title, should be united to her."

On the 12th August, 1526, a year after his marriage, he writes thus to Stiefel: "Catherine, my dear rib, salutes you. She is quite well, thank God; gentle, obedient, and kind in all things, far beyond my hopes. (I would not exchange my poverty with her, for all the riches of Cræsus without her.)"

His poverty, indeed, at this period was extreme; and anxious to provide for his wife, and the family he saw reason to anticipate, he determined to have recourse to some occupation for a livelihood: "If the world will not support us for the sake of the Word, let us learn to support ourselves by the labour of our hands." As a matter of choice, doubtless, had the matter been open to him, he would have selected one of the arts he so loved—that of Albert Durer and of his friend Lucas Cranach, or music, which he was wont to call the first science after theology; but, unprovided with a master to teach him either of these, he became a turner. "Since amongst us barbarians there is no man of art to instruct us in better things, I and my servant, Wolfgang have set ourselves to turning." In one of his letters, we find him directing Wenceslaus Link to purchase the necessary instruments for him at Nuremberg. He also applied himself to gardening and building. "I have laid out a garden," he writes to Spalatin, (December, 1525,) "and I have constructed a fountain, and have succeeded excellently well in both undertakings."

In April, 1527, writing to an abbot at Nuremberg, who had made him a present of a clock, he says: "I must put myself to school with some mechanician, so that I may understand the wonderful details of the clock you have sent me, for I never saw anything like it before." And, a month after, he writes: "I have received the turning tools, and the

dial, and the cylinder, and the wooden clock. You omitted to mention how much more I have to pay you. For the present, I have got tools enough, unless, indeed, you have any instruments newly discovered that will turn of themselves, while that idle knave of mine is snoring or gaping about him. I have made considerable progress in clock-making, and I am very much delighted at it, for these drunken Saxons need to be constantly reminded of what the real time is; not that they themselves care much about it, for so long as their glasses are kept filled, they trouble themselves very little as to whether clocks or clockmakers, or the time itself, go right." (19th May, 1527.) "My melons," he writes, on the 5th July, "as well as my gourds and pumpkins are getting up famously; so you see the seeds you sent me were not thrown away."

Melons, gourds, and pumpkins, however, are but a miserable resource, and Luther soon found himself in a situation as singular as it was afflicting. Here was the man who had defied and fought popes and sovereign-princes, compelled to depend for his daily subsistence upon the precarious and scanty aid of the elector. The new church, in throwing off the thrall of popery, had placed itself in subjection to the civil authority, and the civil authority had left it, from its very birth, to starve.

In 1523, Luther wrote to Spalatin, proposing to resign the revenue of his convent into the hands of the elector: "Since we no longer read, nor sing, nor say mass, nor do anything our founder contemplated that we should do, we have no business to live upon his money, and we ought, therefore, to hand over the property to whomsoever may show a better title to it. (November.)

"Staupitz has not sent us our money yet, and meantime we are becoming more and more involved in debt.¹ I don't know what to do; whether to send once more to the elector, or to let things take their course, from bad to worse, until absolute misery and starvation compel me, for aught I know, to quit Wittemberg, and make it up with the pope and the emperor." (November, 1523.) "Here we are expected to pay everybody, and yet nobody pays us. Things are come

¹ See Appendix XLVIII'

to a fine pass, truly!" (1 February, 1524.) "I am becoming day by day more and more overwhelmed with debt; I shall be compelled to solicit alms, by and by." (24th April, 1524.) "This sort of thing cannot possibly continue. These delays on the part of the prince necessarily give rise to great suspicions in our minds. As to myself, I should long since have quitted the convent, to live elsewhere by the labour of my hands (though here, God knows, I labour hard enough,) had I not feared thereby to compromise the gospel and my prince." (December, 1524.)

"You ask me for eight florins: where on earth am I to get eight florins? As you know, I am compelled to live with the strictest economy, and yet my want of means, perhaps my want of care, has necessitated me to contract, during the past year, debts amounting to more than a hundred florins, which I must, somehow or other, and at some time or other, repay to various persons. I have been obliged to pawn three goblets, presents from different people, for fifty florins, and absolutely to sell one for twelve." (He writes elsewhere, with reference to this debt: "The Lord, who punished me so long for this imprudence of mine, has at length relieved me from its effects.") "Neither Lucas nor Christian will any longer accept me as security, for they have found that by doing so, they either lose all the money, or that my poor purse is drained of its last penny." (2nd February, 1527.)¹

"Tell Nicholas Endrissus to send to me for some copies of my works. I have retained certain claims upon my publishers in this respect, as is just, seeing that, poor as I am, I get no money from them for my labour,² nor any other return, except that of, now and then, a copy or two of my productions.³ This is not too much to expect, I should say, considering that other writers, even mere translators, receive a ducat a sheet for their manuscript." (5th July, 1527.)

"What has occurred, my dear Spalatin, that you should write to me in so menacing and imperious a tone? Has not Jonas already undergone enough of your contumely, and that of your prince, that you are still so inveterate against the excel-

¹ Luther's income never exceeded two hundred Misnian florins.

² See Appendix XLIX.

³ The bookseller had offered him an annual stipend of four hundred florins for whatever he might write, be it less or more, but he did not think it right to take the money.

lent man. I know the prince's character well, I know with what slights he is in the habit of treating men. . . . Is it, I ask you, honouring the gospel, to refuse to its ministers a small subsistence? I tell you, it is at once gross injustice and treacherous meanness to order him privately to depart, and yet in public to wear an air as though you had given him no such order. Think you that your tricks will pass unobserved by Christ? . . . I don't imagine that we have been the occasion of any pecuniary loss to your prince; on the contrary, I am pretty certain that he has already realized a very handsome balance of the goods of this world by our means, and that he is likely to realize still more. I have no fear but God will provide us with food, if you refuse it us; but for your own sakes, dear Spalatin, I beseech you to treat us poor exiles in Christ with greater consideration and kindness. At all events, I request you to explain yourself distinctly and definitely, in order that we may know what we are about; whether we are to go or stay, and that we may be no longer made fools of by people, who, while they order us to go forth, are afraid of our naming, in our own justification, those who compelled us to take that step." (27th November, 1524.)

"We have received, dear Gerard Lampadarius, the letter and the cloth you have so benevolently bestowed upon us. . . We burn the lamp you gave us, every night; and both Catherine and myself frequently lament that we have been able to make you no little present in return, at once to mark our gratitude, and that you might have something about you which should retain us in your memory. I am ashamed of myself, that I have hitherto omitted to make you even a present of some printed paper, for that is in my power; but I will not delay to send you a parcel of my books. I would have forwarded you herewith a German Isaiah I have just published, but there has been such an overflowing demand for the work, that I have absolutely not got a copy left." (14th October, 1528.)

To Martin Gorlitz, who had sent him a barrel of beer, he writes: "Thy Cerealian gift from Torgau has been done noble justice to. I assure thee, that it has dispensed happiness in appreciating quarters. My co-visitors seemed as though they would never have done drinking and praising it, praising

it and drinking it. They exalted its qualities above those of all the barrels of beer they had ever been at the broaching of. And here have I, lout that I am, omitted till this present moment, to thank thee and thy Emilia for the bounteous gift! But the fact is, I am a poor *οιχοδεσποτης* (housekeeper), so heedless of domestic affairs, so forgetful, that, until the other day, I had not recalled to mind that thy pleasant donation was in my cellar at all; and then it was my servant who brought it to my recollection. Salute, in my name, all our brethren, and, more especially, salute in my name, thy Emilia and her son, the graceful hind and the young fawn. May the Lord bless thee, and multiply thee a thousand-fold, in the Spirit as in the flesh!" (15th January, 1529.)

On the 29th March, 1529, Luther sends word to Amsdorf, that he is about to receive into his house the wife of a mutual friend, who is near her confinement: "If my Catherine should be brought to bed at the same time, so much the worse for thy pocket; so come, having first girded on, not a sword, but a bag with silver and gold therein, for I will not let thee off without a handsome present on the occasion."

To Jonas he writes: "I had read ten lines of your letter when it was announced to me that my Ketha had given me a daughter. *Gloria et laus Patri in Cælis*. My little John has recovered. Augustin's wife is getting better, and so is Margaret Mochinn, whose escape from death seems an absolute miracle. On the other hand, we have lost five pigs, which is very disagreeable; however, I hope the plague will accept them as our full contribution: *Ego sum, qui sum hactenus, scilicet ut Apostolus, quasi mortuus, et ecce vivo.*"

The plague had broken out in Wittemberg, just as Luther's wife was on the eve of her confinement, and his little son very ill with his teeth. Two women who were on a visit in the house, Hannah and Margaret Mochinn, were attacked with the pestilence, so that he might truly say, as he did in a letter to Amsdorf, (1st Nov., 1527,) "My house has become a regular hospital."

"The wife of George, our chaplain, died a few days ago of the plague. Everybody seemed afraid to have any intercourse with the poor fellow, so we took him and his children into our house." (4th Nov., 1527.) "Thy little favourite, John, does not salute thee, for he is too ill to speak, but,

through me, he solicits your prayers. For the last twelve days he has not eaten a morsel. 'Tis wonderful to see how the poor child keeps up his spirits; he would manifestly be as gay and joyous as ever, were it not for the excess of his physical weakness. Margaret Mochinn's imposthume was opened yesterday, and she is getting quite round again already; I have put her into our winter bedroom; we ourselves are in the great front room, Jenny in the chamber with the stove, and Augustin's wife in her own room; we are beginning to hope that the plague will soon disappear. Farewell; salute thy daughter and her mother in our name, and remember us all in thy prayers." (10th Nov., 1527.)

"My poor son was all but dead, but he has now recovered; he had eaten nothing for twelve days. It has pleased the Lord to increase my family with a daughter. We are all well, except myself, who, though sound in body and apart from the world, still suffer within from the assaults of Satan and all his angels. I am writing, for the second and last time, against the sacramentarians and their futilities." (31st Dec., 1527.)

"My little daughter, Elizabeth, is dead; 'tis wonderful how sick at heart her loss has made me; I feel a mere woman, so great is the agitation that has since pervaded me. I could never have dreamed that a man's soul could be filled with such tenderness even towards his child." (5th August, 1528.)

"I am now, unhappily, in a condition to explain to you truly what it is to be a parent, *præsertem sexûs, qui ultra filiorum casum etiam habet misericordiam valde moventem.*" (5th June, 1530.)

Towards the close of the year 1527, Luther was himself several times attacked with illness both of body and of mind.¹ On the 27th October, he thus closes a letter to Melancthon: "I have not yet read Erasmus' new work, and indeed, how should I read it—I, a poor sick servant of Christ, who can hardly keep life within him. This is no time for me to read, or write, or do anything at all. Yet it is hard: it would really seem as though God had resolved to overwhelm me with all the waves of his displeasure at once. Men who ought to have compassion upon me, are selecting the very moment of my bodily and mental prostration, to come and give

¹ Werke, ix. 238.

me a final thrust. God mend them and enlighten them! Amen."

Two intimate friends of Luther, doctor John Bugenhagen and doctor Jonas, have left us the following account of an alarming swoon into which Luther fell towards the end of this year: "On the Saturday of the visitation, in the afternoon, doctor Luther complained of great pains in the head, and of a violent buzzing in the ear. He felt convinced he was going to die. Early next morning, he sent for doctor Bugenhagen to receive his confession. He spoke to him with terror of the temptations which he had been undergoing of late, entreated his support and his prayers for him with God, and concluded by saying: 'Because I sometimes wear a gay and joyous aspect, many people fancy that my path is one of roses; God knows how different is the fact. God knows what is in my heart. I have often determined within myself that, for the public advantage, I would assume a more austere, a holier (so to speak) exterior, but God has not enabled me to carry this resolution into effect.'

"In the afternoon of the same day, he fell quite senseless on the floor, became cold, and gave no sign of life. When, by the zealous attentions lavished upon him, he was restored to himself, he began praying with great fervour: 'Thou knowest, O God,' said he, 'that I would willingly have poured forth my blood for thee, but thou didst ordain that it should not be so. Thy will be done! Doubtless, I was not worthy to become such a sacrifice. Death would be welcome; but, O my God, if thou so willest, I am ready to live on to spread abroad thy Holy Word, and console and strengthen those who are faint-hearted. If, on the other hand, my hour is come, Thy will be done; blessed be thy name! Thou art the master of life and of death.'

" 'O my Lord Jesus Christ! I thank thee for that thou didst me the grace to let me know thy holy name. Thou knowest that I believe in thee, and in God the Father, and in the Holy Ghost; thou art my divine Mediator and Saviour. Thou knowest, O my Lord, that Satan has laid many snares for me, to kill my body by means of his tyrants, and my soul by his fiery darts, by his infernal temptations. Hitherto thou hast miraculously protected me against all his fury. Protect me still, O my faithful Lord, if such be thy will.

“Then he turned to us, and said: ‘The world loves lying, and there will be many, who, when I am gone, will say that I retracted on my death bed. I therefore earnestly desire you now to hear, and having heard, to retain in your memories my profession of faith: I declare, in my conscience, that I have taught the true word of God, as the Lord taught it me. I declare that what I have preached as to faith, charity, the cross, the holy sacrament, and other articles of the Christian doctrines, is all just, good, and salutary.’

“‘Many charge me with having been too violent, too harsh. I admit that I have sometimes been violent and harsh towards my enemies. But I will, on the other hand, affirm that I have never sought to injure any one, and still less have I ever sought to cause the perdition of any man’s soul. I had proposed to myself to write upon baptism, and against Zwinglius, but, as it appears, God has decided otherwise.’

“Afterwards he spoke of the sects which he said would rise up to pervert the word of God, and assail the flock which the Lord had redeemed with his blood. He wept as he spoke of these things. ‘Hitherto,’ he added, ‘God has permitted me to struggle at your side against these spirits of disorder, and I would willingly continue the good fight; but I fear me that alone you will not be able to bear up against them, they are so many and so furious. Yet have I confidence in Jesus Christ, for he is stronger than Satan with all his arms; he is master of Satan.’

“By and by, when the circulation was more fully restored by means of constant friction and the application of hot pillows, he said to his wife, ‘Where is my little darling, my dear little John.’ The child, when brought to him, smiled upon its father, who, with tears in his eyes, sobbed forth: ‘My poor, dear little boy, I commend thee heartily to our Lord God, thou and thy good mother, my beloved Catherine. I leave you nothing, but God will provide for you, He who is the father of widows and orphans. Preserve them, O God; teach them, as thou hast preserved and taught me.’ He then said a few words to his wife about some silver goblets, adding, ‘Thou knowest, they are all we possess.’

“He then fell asleep, and the slumber proving long and deep, restored to him so much strength that the next day he found himself much better. ‘I shall never,’ he observed to

Dr. Jonas, 'I shall never forget the day I spent yesterday. The Lord leads man to the brink of hell, and then withdraws him from its rude jaws. The tempest which yesterday morning broke upon my soul, was infinitely more terrible than that which in the evening assailed my body. God kills and revives us. He is the master of life and of death.'

"'For nearly three months,' he writes on the 8th Oct. 1527, 'I have been languishing not so much in body as in mind, so that I have scarce been able in that whole time to pen as many lines. These are the persecutions of Satan.

"'I want to answer the Sacramentarians, but if my soul does not acquire greater strength, I shall not be capable of doing that or anything else.' (1 Nov. 1527) 'I have not yet read Erasmus' recent books, nor the late productions of the Sacramentarians, with the exception of a few pages of Zwinglius. It is well done in them to take advantage of my debility to crush me under foot. I alone bear the burden of God's anger, because I have sinned towards him; the pope and the emperor, the princes and bishops, the whole people hate me and assail me; and, as if this were not enough, my own brethren now come to persecute me! My sins, death, the devil and his angels incessantly assail me. And who will guard me, who console me, if Jesus Christ also abandons me; He for whom I have incurred all this hatred! But he will not abandon the miserable sinner in his extremity; not even myself, for I think I shall be the last of all men. Oh, please God! please God, that Erasmus and the Sacramentarians may some day, if only for a quarter of an hour, undergo the agonies which my poor heart endures. (10 Nov. 1527.)

"'Satan makes me suffer terrible temptations, but the prayers of the saints do not abandon me, though the wounds of my heart are hard to cure. My consolation is that there are many others who have to fight the same internal fights. Doubtless, I have committed sins more than enough to warrant the torments I undergo; but my life and my strength is, the consciousness that I have taught, to the salvation of many, the true and pure Word of God; it is this which so infuriates Satan, who gnashes his teeth at the thought that he has not been able to drown and destroy me and the Word . . . I have not suffered bodily the cruelties which the tyrants of this world have inflicted upon those who have been burned and

slaughtered for the sake of Christ; but Satan has made me writhe all the more with the martyrdom of the soul.' (21 Aug. 1527.)

"When I try to work, my head becomes filled with all sorts of whizzing, buzzing, thundering noises, and if I did not leave off on the instant, I should faint away. For the last three days, I have not been able even to look at a letter. My head has lessened down to a very short chapter, soon it will be only a paragraph, then only a syllable, then nothing at all. . . . The day your letter came from Nuremberg, I had another visit from the devil. I was alone, Vitus and Cyriacus having gone out, and this time the evil one got the better of me, drove me out of my bed, and compelled me to seek the face of man." (12th May, 1530.)

"I am well in health, but sick at heart from the persecutions of Satan, so that I can neither read nor write. The last day, I feel convinced, is near at hand. Farewell. omit not to pray frequently for poor Luther." (28th Feb., 1529.) "One may extinguish the temptations of the flesh; but, oh! how difficult it is to struggle against the temptations of blasphemy and despair! We do not comprehend sin, and we are equally ignorant of the true remedy." After a week of constant suffering, we find him writing, on the 2nd August, 1527: "Having well-nigh lost my Christ, I was beaten about fearfully on the waves and tempests of despair and blasphemy."

Amidst all this internal disorder, Luther, so far from being supported and consoled by his friends, found them either simply luke-warm and hesitatingly sceptical, or else actually quitting him, and rushing onward in the path of mysticism which he himself, some years before, had thrown open. The first of these who openly declared his independence and new views, was Agricola, the leader of the Antimonians. (*enemies of the law.*) We shall see further on, how painful to Luther, in his last moments, was the controversy thus necessitated with so dear a friend.

"Some one has told me a story about you, my dear Agricola," he writes on the 11th September, 1528, "and persists so determinedly in the truth of what he relates, that I promised him I would write to you, and satisfy myself on the subject. This story is, that you were propounding that one

may have faith without works, and that you were defending this innovation against all comers, with great pomp of Greek words, and much rhetorical artifice. . . . I warn you to mistrust the snares of Satan. . . . I was never more astounded at anything than I was at the secession of Œcolampadius and Regius; and what have I not now to fear for these men, once my intimate associates? In even a still greater degree do I tremble for you: not for the world would I see you severed from us."

"Why should I fret and fume against the papists?¹ All they have done against me has been in fair, open war: we are declared enemies, and act as such. They who hurt me most are my own dear children. My brothers, *fraterculi mei, aurei amiculi mei*—they who, if Luther had not written, would know nothing of Christ, or of the gospel, and would not have shaken off the papal yoke; for even if they had had the power to do so, the courage would have been wanting. I thought I had gone through, had exhausted all the adversities the evil one could inflict; but it was not so. My Absalom, the child of my heart, had not deserted his father, had not poured out ignominy upon David; my Judas, the terror of the disciples of Christ, the traitor who delivered up his master, had not sold me: he has done so now.²

"There is now going on against us a clandestine but very dangerous persecution. Our ministry is contemned; we ourselves are hated, oppressed, left to starve.³ Such is at present the lot of God's word; when it is offered to those who have need of it, they will not receive it. . . . Christ would not have been crucified had he left Jerusalem. But the prophet would not consent to die out of Jerusalem, though, as it is well known, a prophet is not honoured in his own country. 'Tis the same with us. . . . It will soon come to pass that the nobles of this duchy will have cleared it completely of ministers of the Word—driven away by hunger, to say nothing of other outrages." (18th October, 1531.)

"There is nothing known for certain about the preternatural appearances which have made so much noise in Bohemia.⁴ Many people repudiate them altogether. As to the gulf, however, which opened here under my own eyes,

¹ See Appendix L. ² Cochläus, 146. ³ See Appendix LI. ⁴ Ib. LII.

on the Sunday after Epiphany, at eight o'clock in the evening, there is no doubt about that; and the same thing was witnessed in various places between this and the sea. Moreover, Dr. Hess writes me word, that, in December last, the whole heavens were seen on fire above the church of Breslau; and another day, there were witnessed in the same place two circles of fire, one within the other, and in the centre of them, a blazing pillar. These signs announce, it is my firm opinion, the approach of the Last Day. The empire is falling, kings are falling, princes are falling, the whole world totters, and, like a great house about to tumble down, manifests its coming destruction by wide gaps and crevices on its surface. This will infallibly happen, and ere long, unless the Turk, as Ezekiel prophesied of Gog and Magog, have fire sent against him by God, and be destroyed in his pride of conquest, together with his ally the pope."¹ (7th March, 1529.)

"Grace and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. The world approaches its end, and it often comes into my thoughts that perhaps the day of judgment will arrive before I have finished my translation of the Bible. All the temporal events we find predicted therein have been accomplished. The Roman empire tends nearly to its ruin; the Turk has attained the summit of his power; the papal splendour is fast becoming eclipsed; the world cracks in every direction, as though about to fall in pieces. The empire, it may be said, has received a new impulse from our Cæsar, Charles; but this is, perhaps, its last effort, the flame of the candle burning up more brightly than ever for the moment preceding its extinction." . . .

"The Turk is about to thunder down upon us: he, unless I am much mistaken, will be found to be the reformer sent us by God in his anger." (15th March.)

"There is now in my house a man just arrived from Venice, who assures me that the son of the doge is, at the present moment, at the court of the grand Turk; so that we may fairly look forward to having the pope, the Venetians, and the French, ere long, impudently, and in the face of day, turning Turks, and fighting for their new master against us. The same man tells me that there were in the army of the

¹ Werke, ix. 542.

French, at Pavia, eight hundred Turks, three hundred of whom returned safe and sound home to their own country, when they got tired of fighting. From your not having referred to these monstrosities, I conclude you have not heard of them; but I can assure you they have been related to me, both *vivâ voce* and in writing, upon authority and with circumstantial details which do not permit me for a moment to entertain a doubt about them. The hour of midnight approaches, when the cry will be heard, *Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.*" (6th May, 1529.)

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