

CHAPTER 21 : HISTORY OF PROTESTANTISM IN GERMANY TO THE LEIPSIC DISPUTATION, 1519

The Reformation advanced remarkably in the early years of the sixteenth century. Indeed, this time often marks the inception of the Protestant Reformation proper, although we have already traced the Reformation's true beginning to Wyckliffe more than a century earlier. The central figure at the beginning of this great advancement was Martin Luther of Germany.

Martin Luther was born in 1483 of humble background. However, his father – John Luther- increased in wealth as Martin grew older, owing to John's industriousness. He became the owner of two furnaces, and in time a member of the Town Council. His father's increasing prosperity allowed Martin greater educational opportunities. Accordingly, at the age of fourteen years Martin was sent to the Franciscan school at Magdeburg. And in 1501 Luther entered the University of Erfurt.

Martin's father wished him to study law, not doubting that with his great talents he would speedily achieve eminence, and fill some post of emolument and dignity in the civic administration of his country. In this hope John Luther toiled harder than ever, that he might support his son more liberally than heretofore. But Martin Luther would follow a different course than that designed by his father.

While a student at Erfurt, he first read the scriptures. The opportunity arose as he was reading sundry books in the university library. One day, as he took down the books from their shelves, and opened them one after another, he came to a volume unlike all the others. Taking it from its place, he opened it, and to his surprise found that it was a Bible – the Vulgate, or Latin translation of the Holy Scriptures, by Jerome. The Bible he had never seen till now. His joy was great. There are certain portions which the Church prescribes to be read in public on Sundays and saints' days, and Luther imagined that these were the whole Bible. His surprise was great when, on opening the volume, he found in it whole books and epistles of which he had never before heard. He began to read with the feelings of one to whom the heavens have been opened. Day after day Luther returned to the library, took down the old book, devoured some Gospel of the New or story of the Old Testament, rejoicing as one that finds great store of spoil, gazing upon its page as Columbus may be supposed to have gazed on the plains and mountains of the New World, when the mists of ocean opened and unveiled it to him. Meanwhile, a change was passing upon Luther by the reading of that book. Other books had developed and strengthened his faculties, this book was awakening new powers within him. The old Luther was passing away, another Luther was coming in his place. From that moment began those struggles in his soul which were destined never to cease till they issued not merely in a new man, but a new age – a new Europe. Out of the Bible at Oxford came the first dawn of the Reformation: out of this old Bible at Erfurt came its second morning.

Later, in 1503, Martin Luther earned his Doctor of Philosophy, and he began to devote himself, in conformity with his father's wishes, to the bar. But two incidents affected him, which led him to change direction. First, he was told that his friend Alexius had been

overtaken by a sudden and violent death. The intelligence stunned Luther. His companion had fallen as it were by his side. Conscience, first quickened by the old Bible, again awoke. Soon after this, he paid a visit to his parents at Mansfeld. He was returning to Erfurt, and was now near the city gate, when suddenly black clouds gathered overhead, and it began to thunder and lighten in an awful manner. A bolt fell at his feet. Some accounts say that he was thrown down. In his terror he vowed that should God spare him he would devote his life to His service. The lightning ceased, the thunders rolled past, and Luther, rising from the ground and pursuing his journey with solemn steps, soon entered the gates of Erfurt. The vow must be fulfilled.

To serve God was to wear a monk's hood – so did the age understand it, and so too did Luther. To one so fitted to enjoy the delights of friendship, so able to win the honors of life – nay, with these honors all but already grasped – a terrible wrench it must be to tear himself from the world and enter a monastery – a living grave. But his vow was irrevocable. The greater the sacrifice, the more the merit. He must pacify his conscience; and as yet he knew not of the more excellent way. Once more he will see his friends, and then – He prepares a frugal supper; he calls together his acquaintances; he regales them with music; he converses with apparent gaiety. And now the feast is at an end, and the party has broken up. Luther walks straight to the Augustinian Convent, on the 17th of August, 1505. He knocks at the gate; the door is opened, and he enters.

To Luther, groaning under sin, and seeking deliverance by the works of the law, that monastery – so quiet, so holy, so near to heaven, as he thought – seemed a very Paradise. Soon as he had crossed its threshold the world would be shut out; sin, too, would be shut out; and that sore trouble of soul which he was enduring would be at an end. At this closed door the "Avenger" would be stayed. So thought Luther as he crossed its threshold. There is a city of refuge to which the sinner may flee when death and hell are on his track, but it is not that into which Luther had now entered.

When the tidings reached Luther's father, he was in rage. He had toiled night and day to be able to educate his son; he had seen him win one academic honor after another; already in imagination he saw him discharging the highest duties and wearing the highest dignities of the State. In a moment all these hopes had been swept away; all had ended in a monk's hood and cowl. John Luther declared that nothing of his should his son ever inherit.

On entering the Augustinian convent Luther changed his name to Augustine. But in the convent life he did not find that rest and peace to enjoy which he had fled thither. He was still seeking life, not from Christ, but from monastic holiness, and had he found rest in the convent he would have missed the eternal rest. It was not long till he was made to feel that he had carried his great burden with him into the monastery, that the apprehensions of wrath which haunted him in the world had followed him hither; that, in fact, the convent bars had shut him in with them; for here his conscience began to thunder more loudly than ever, and his inward torments grew every day more insupportable. Whither shall Luther now flee? He knows no holier place on earth than the cell, and if not here,

where shall he find a shadow from this great heat, a rock of shelter from this terrible blast?

During these times Luther enjoyed reading the works of Augustine, but there was another book which he prized yet more. This was God's own Word, a copy of which he lighted on in the monastery. This Bible he could not take with him to his cell and there read and study it, for it was chained in the chapel of the convent; but he could and did go to it, and sometimes he spent whole days in meditation upon a single verse or word. It was now that he betook him to the study of the original tongues, that being able to read the scriptures in the languages in which they were at first written, he might see deeper into their meaning. Reuchlin's Hebrew Lexicon had recently appeared, and with this and other helps he made rapid progress in the knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek. In the ardor of this pursuit he would forget for weeks together to repeat the daily prayers. His conscience would smite him for transgressing the rules of his order, and he would neither eat nor sleep till the omitted services had been performed, and all arrears discharged. It once happened that for seven weeks he scarcely closed his eyes.

The communicative and jovial student was now changed into the taciturn solitary. The person as well as the manners of Luther had undergone a transformation. What with the drudgery of the day, the studies of the night, the meager meals he allowed himself – "a little bread and a small herring were often his only food" – the fasts and macerations he practiced, he was more like a corpse than a living man. The fire within was still consuming him. He fell sometimes on the floor of his cell in sheer weakness. "One morning, the door of his cell not being opened as usual, the brethren became alarmed. They knocked: there was no reply. The door was burst in, and poor Fra Martin was found stretched on the ground in a state of ecstasy, scarcely breathing, well-nigh dead. A monk took his flute, and gently playing upon it one of the airs that Luther loved, brought him gradually back to himself."

It was indeed a bitter cup that Luther was now drinking, but it could by no means pass from him. He must drink yet deeper, he must drain it to its dregs. Those works which he did in such bondage of spirit were the price with which he thought to buy pardon.

It was well that Luther neither despaired nor abandoned the pursuit as hopeless. He persevered in reading Augustine, and yet more in studying the chained Bible; and it cannot be but that some rays must have broken in through his darkness. Why was it that he could not obtain peace? As Luther, hour by hour, is sinking in the abyss, nearer, hour by hour, are heard the approaching footsteps of the man who is to aid him in breaking the bars of his own and the world's prison.

As in the darkest night a star will at times look forth, all the lovelier that it shines out amidst the clouds of tempest, so there appeared at intervals, during the long and dark night of Christendom, a few men of eminent piety in the Church of Rome. Taught of the Spirit, they trusted not in the Church, but in Christ alone, for salvation; and amid the darkness that surrounded them they saw the light, and followed it. One of these men was John Staupitz.

Staupitz was Vicar-General of the Augustines of Germany. He knew the way of salvation, having learned it from the study of Augustine and the Bible. He saw and acknowledged the errors and vices of the age, and deplored the devastation they were inflicting on the Church. The purity of his own life condemned the corruptions around him, but he lacked the courage to be the Reformer of Christendom. Nevertheless, God honored him by making him signally serviceable to the man who was destined to be that Reformer.

It chanced to the Vicar-General to be at this time on a tour of visitation among the convents of the Augustinians in Germany, and the path he had traced for himself led him to that very monastery within whose walls the sore struggle we have described was going on. Staupitz came to Erfurt. His eye, trained to read the faces on which it fell, lighted on the young monk. The Vicar-General called the monk to him, spoke words of kindness – accents now become strange to Luther, for the inmates of his monastery could account for his conflicts only by believing him possessed of the Evil One – and by degrees he won his confidence. Luther felt that there was a mysterious influence in the words of Staupitz, which penetrated his soul, and was already exerting a soothing and mitigating effect upon his trouble. In the Vicar-General the monk met the first man who really understood his case. They conversed together in the secrecy of the monastic cell. Luther laid open his whole soul; he concealed nothing from the Vicar-General. He told him all his temptations, all his horrible thoughts – his vows a thousand times repeated and as often broken; how he shrank from the sight of his own vileness, and how he trembled when he thought of the holiness of God. It was not the sweet promise of mercy, but the fiery threatening of the law, on which he dwelt. "Who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?"

"Why do you torture yourself with these thoughts? Look at the wounds of Christ," said Staupitz, anxious to turn away the monk's eye from his own wounds – his stripes, macerations, fastings – by which he hoped to move God to pity. "Look at the blood Christ shed for you," continued his skillful counselor; "it is there the grace of God will appear to you." "I cannot and dare not come to God," replied Luther, in effect, "till I am a better man; I have not yet repented sufficiently." "A better man!" would the Vicar-General say in effect; "Christ came to save not good men, but sinners. Love God, and you will have repented; there is no real repentance that does not begin in the love of God; and there is no love to God that does not take its rise in all apprehension of that mercy which offers to sinners freedom from sin through the blood of Christ." "Faith in the mercies of God! This is the star that goeth before the face of Repentance, the pillar of fire that guideth her in the night of her sorrows, and giveth her light," and showeth her the way to the throne of God.

These were wise words, and "the words of the wise are as nails, and as goads fastened in a sure place by the master of assemblies." So was it with the words of the Vicar-General; a light from heaven accompanied them, and shone into the understanding of Luther. He felt that a healing balm had touched his wound, that a refreshing oil had been poured upon his bruised spirit. Before leaving him, the Vicar-General made him the present of a

Bible, which Luther received with unbounded joy; and most sacredly did he obey the parting injunction of Staupitz: "Let the study of the scriptures be your favorite occupation."

But the change in Luther was not yet complete. It is hard to enter into life – to cast out of the heart that distrust and fear of God with which sin has filled it, and take in the grand yet true idea of God's infinite love, and absolutely free and boundless mercy.

Luther's faith was as yet but as a grain of mustard-seed. After Staupitz had taken leave of him he again turned his eye from the Savior to himself; the clouds of despondency and fear that instant gathered; and his old conflicts, though not with the same violence, were renewed. He fell ill, and in his sore sickness he lay at the gates of death. It pleased God on this bed, and by a very humble instrument, to complete the change which the Vicar-General had commenced. An aged brother-monk who, as Luther afterwards said, was doubtless a true Christian though he wore "the cowl of damnation," came to his bedside, and began to recite with much simplicity and earnestness the Apostle's Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Luther repeated after him in feeble accents, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." "Nay," said the monk, "you are to believe not merely in the forgiveness of David's sins, and of Peter's sins; you must believe in the forgiveness of your own sins." The decisive words had been spoken. A ray of light had penetrated the darkness that encompassed Luther. He saw it all: the whole gospel in a single phrase, the forgiveness of sins – not the payment, but the forgiveness.

In that hour the principle of Popery in Luther's soul fell. He no longer looked to himself and to the Church for salvation. He saw that God had freely forgiven him in His Son Jesus Christ. His prison doors stood open. He was in a new world. God had loosed his sackcloth and girded him with gladness. The healing of his spirit brought health to his body; and in a little while he rose from that bed of sickness, which had so nearly been to him the bed of death. The gates of destruction were, in God's marvelous mercy, changed into the gates of Paradise.

Luther had been two years in the monastery, when in 1507, he was ordained to the priesthood. Luther passed another year in his cell, and left it in haste at last, as Joseph his prison, being summoned to fill a wider sphere. The University of Wittemberg was founded in 1502 by Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony. He wished, as he said in its charter, to make it the light of his kingdom. He little dreamed what a fulfillment awaited his wish. The elector was looking round him for fit men for its chairs. Staupitz, whose sagacity and honorable character gave him great weight with Frederick, recommended the Augustinian monk at Erfurt. The electoral invitation was immediately dispatched to Luther, and accepted by him. And now we behold him, disciplined by God, rich in the experience of himself, and illumined with the knowledge of the gospel, bidding the monastery a final adieu, though not as yet the cowl, and going forth to teach in the newly-founded University of Wittemberg.

At the University of Wittemberg Martin Luther taught theology. As part of his instruction, he selected for exposition the Epistle to the Romans – that book which shines

like a glorious constellation in the firmament of the Bible, gathering as it does into one group all the great themes of revelation.

Staupitz watched the career of the young professor with peculiar and lively satisfaction. He was even now planning a yet wider usefulness for him. Why, thought Staupitz, should Luther confine his light within the walls of the university? Around him in Wittemberg, and in all the towns of Germany, are multitudes who are as sheep without a shepherd, seeking to satisfy their hunger with the husks on which the monks feed them; why not minister to these men also the Bread of Life? The Vicar-General proposed to Luther that he should preach in public. He shrank back from so august an office – so weighty a responsibility. "In less than six months," said Luther, "I shall be in my grave." But Staupitz knew the monk better than he knew himself; he continued to urge his proposal, and at last Luther consented. We have followed him from the cell to the professor's chair, now we are to follow him from the chair to the pulpit.

Luther opened his public ministry in no proud cathedral, but in one of the humblest sanctuaries in all Germany. In the center of the public square stood an old wooden church, thirty feet long and twenty broad. Far from magnificent in even its best days, it was now sorely decayed. Tottering to its fall, it needed to be propped up on all sides. In this chapel was a pulpit of boards raised three feet over the level of the floor. This was the place assigned to the young preacher.

If his learning and subtlety fitted Luther to shine in the university, not less did his powers of popular eloquence enable him to command the attention of his countrymen. Before his day the pulpit had sunk ineffably low. At that time not a secular priest in all Italy ever entered a pulpit. Preaching was wholly abandoned to the Mendicant friars. These persons knew neither human nor Divine knowledge. But the preacher who now appeared in the humble pulpit of the wooden chapel of Wittemberg spoke with authority, and not as the friars. His animated face, his kindling eye, his thrilling tones – above all, the majesty of the truths which he announced – captivated the hearts and awed the consciences of his hearers. He proclaimed pardon and heaven, not as indirect gifts through priests, but as direct from God. Men wondered at these tidings – so new, so strange, and yet so refreshing and welcome.

His fame as a preacher grew. From the surrounding cities came crowds to hear him. The timbers of the old edifice creaked under the multitude of listeners. It was far too small to accommodate the numbers that flocked to it.

The Town Council of Wittemberg now elected him to be their preacher, and gave him the use of the parish church. On one occasion the Elector Frederick was among his hearers, and expressed his admiration of the simplicity and force of his language, and the copiousness and weight of his matter. In presence of this larger audience his eloquence burst forth in new power. Still wider shone the light, and more numerous every day were the eyes that turned towards the spot where it was rising.

It was necessary that Luther should pause a little while in the midst of his labors. He had been working for some time under high pressure, and neither mind nor body would long have endured the strain. Besides, Luther needed one lesson more in order to his full training as the future Reformer, and that lesson he could receive only in a foreign land. In his cell at Erfurt he had been shown the sinfulness of his own heart, and his helplessness as a lost sinner. This must be the foundation of his training. At Rome he must be shown the vileness of that Church which he still regarded as the Church of Christ and the abode of holiness.

As often happens, a very trivial matter led to what resulted in the highest consequences both to Luther himself and to Christendom. A quarrel broke out between seven monasteries of the Augustines and their Vicar-General. It was agreed to submit the matter to the Pope, and the sagacity and eloquence of Luther recommended him as the fittest person to undertake the task. This was in the year 1510, or, according to others, 1512. We now behold the young monk setting out for the metropolis of Christendom. We may well believe that his pulse beat quicker as every step brought him nearer the Eternal City, illustrious as the abode of the Caesars; still more illustrious as the abode of the Popes. To Luther, Rome was a type of the Holy of Holies. There stood the throne of God's Vicar. There resided the Oracle of Infallibility. There dwelt the consecrated priests and ministers of the Lord. Thither went up, year by year, armies of devout pilgrims, and tribes of holy anchorites and monks, to pay their vows in her temples, and prostrate themselves at the footstool of the apostles. Luther's heart swelled with no common emotion when he thought that his feet would stand within the gates of this thrice-holy city.

Alas, what a terrible disenchantment awaited the monk at the end of his journey; or rather, what a happy emancipation from an enfeebling and noxious illusion! For so long as this spell was upon him, Luther must remain the captive of that power which had imprisoned truth and enchained the nations. An arm with a fetter upon it was not the arm to strike such blows as would emancipate Christendom. He must see Rome, not as his dreams had painted her, but as her own corruptions had made her.

Luther crossed the Alps and descended on the fertile plains of Lombardy. Weary with his journey, he entered a monastery situated on the banks of the Po, to refresh himself a few days. The splendor of the establishment struck him with wonder. Its yearly revenue, amounting to the enormous sum of thirty-six thousand ducats, was all expended in feeding, clothing, and lodging the monks. The apartments were sumptuous in the extreme. They were lined with marble, adorned with paintings, and filled with rich furniture. Equally luxurious and delicate was the clothing of the monks. Silks and velvet mostly formed their attire; and every day they sat down at a table loaded with exquisite and skillfully cooked dishes. The monk who, in his native Germany, had inhabited a bare cell, and whose day's provision was at times only a herring and a small piece of bread, was astonished, but said nothing. Friday came, and on Friday the Church has forbidden the faithful to taste flesh. The table of the monks groaned under the same abundance as before. As on other days, so on this there were dishes of meat. Luther could no longer refrain. "On this day," said Luther, "such things may not be eaten. The Pope has forbidden them." The monks opened their eyes in astonishment on the rude German.

Verily, thought they, his boldness is great. It did not spoil their appetite, but they began to be apprehensive that the German might report their manner of life at headquarters, and they consulted together how this danger might be obviated. The porter, a humane man, dropped a hint to Luther of the risk he would incur should he make a longer stay. Profiting by the friendly counsel to depart hence while health served him, he took leave, with as little delay as possible, of the monastery and all in it.

When he finally reached Rome, Luther was struck by the physical decay and ruin of the place. Noble palaces and glorious monuments rose on every side of him, but, strangely enough, mingled with these were heaps of rubbish and piles of ruins. These were the remains of the once imperial glory of the city – the spoils of war, the creations of genius, the labors of art which had beautified it in its palmy days. They showed him what Rome had been under her pagan consuls and emperors, and they enabled him to judge how much she owed to her Popes. Luther gazed with veneration on these defaced and mutilated remains, associated as they were in his mind with the immortal names of the great men whose deeds had thrilled him, and whose writings had instructed him in his native land.

If it was the physical deformities of Rome – the scars which war or barbarism had inflicted – that formed the first impression on Luther, it was not long till he began to see that these outward blemishes were as nothing to the hideous moral and spiritual corruptions that existed beneath the surface. The luxury, lewdness, and impiety that shocked him in the first Italian towns he had entered, and which had attended him in every step of his journey since crossing the Alps, were all repeated in Rome on a scale of seven-fold magnitude. His practice of saying mass at all the more favored churches brought him into daily contact with the priests; he saw them behind the scenes; he heard their talk, and he could not conceal from himself – though the discovery unspeakably shocked and pained him – that these men were simply playing a part, and that in private they held in contempt the very rites which in public they celebrated with so great a show of devotion. If he was shocked at their profane levity, they on their part were no less astonished at his solemn credulity, and jeered him as a dull German, who had not genius enough to be a skeptic, nor cunning enough to be a hypocrite – a fossilized specimen, in short, of a fanaticism common enough in the twelfth century, but which it amazed them to find still existing in the sixteenth.

One day Luther was saying mass in one of the churches of Rome with his accustomed solemnity. While he had been saying one mass, the priests at the neighboring altars had sung seven. "Make haste, and send Our Lady back her Son:" such was the horrible scoff with which they reproved his delay, as they accounted it. To them "Lady and Son" were worth only the money they brought. But these were the common priests. Surely, thought he, faith and piety still linger among the dignitaries of the Church! How mistaken was even this belief, Luther was soon to discover. One day he chanced to find himself at table with some prelates. Taking the German to be a man of the same easy faith with themselves, they lifted the veil a little too freely. They openly expressed their disbelief in the mysteries of their Church, and shamelessly boasted of their cleverness in deceiving and befooling the people. Instead of the words, "Hoc est meum corpus," etc. – the words

at the utterance of which the bread is changed, as the Church of Rome teaches, into the flesh and blood of Christ – these prelates, as they themselves told him, were accustomed to say, "Panis es, et panis manebis," etc. – Bread thou art, and bread thou wilt remain – and then, said they, we elevate the Host, and the people bow down and worship.

Luther was literally horrified: it was as if an abyss had suddenly yawned beneath him. But the horror was salutary; it opened his eyes. Plainly he must renounce belief in Christianity or in Rome. His struggles at Erfurt had but too surely deepened his faith in the first to permit him to cast it off: it was the last, therefore, that must be let go; but as yet it was not Rome in her doctrines and rites, but Rome in her clergy, from which Luther turned away.

Instead of a city of prayers and alms, of contrite hearts and holy lives, Rome was full of mocking hypocrisy, defiant skepticism, jeering impiety, and shameless revelry. Borgia had lately closed his infamous Pontificate, and the warlike Julius II was now reigning. A powerful police patrolled the city every night. They were empowered to deal summary justice on offenders, and those whom they caught were hanged at the next post or thrown into the Tiber. But all the vigilance of the patrol could not secure the peace and safety of the streets. Robberies and murders were of nightly occurrence. "If there be a hell," said Luther, "Rome is built over it."

And yet it was at Rome, in the midst of all this darkness, that the light shone fully into the mind of the Reformer, and that the great leading idea, that on which his own life was based, and on which he based the whole of that Reformation which God honored him to lead – the doctrine of justification by faith alone – rose upon him in its full-orbed splendor. We naturally ask, How did this come about? What was there in this city of Popish observances to reveal the reformed faith? Luther was desirous of improving every hour of his stay in Rome, where religious acts done on its holy soil, and at its privileged altars and shrines, had a tenfold degree of merit; accordingly he busied himself in multiplying these, that he might nourish his piety, and return a holier man than he came; for as yet he saw but dimly the sole agency of faith in the justification of the sinner.

One day he went, under the influence of these feelings, to the Church of the Lateran. There is the Scala Sancta, or Holy Stairs, which tradition says Christ descended on retiring from the hall of judgment, where Pilate had passed sentence upon him. These stairs are of marble, and the work of conveying them from Jerusalem to Rome was reported to have been undertaken and executed by the angels, who have so often rendered similar services to the Church – Our Lady's House at Loretto for example. The stairs so transported were enshrined in the Palace of the Lateran, and every one who climbs them on his knees merits an indulgence of fifteen years for each ascent. Luther, who doubted neither the legend touching the stairs, nor the merit attached by the bulls of the Popes to the act of climbing them, went thither one day to engage in this holy act. He was climbing the steps in the appointed way, on his knees namely, earning at every step a year's indulgence, when he was startled by a sudden voice, which seemed as if it spoke from heaven, and said, "The just shall live by faith." Luther started to his feet in amazement. This was the third time these same words had been conveyed into his mind

with such emphasis, that it was as if a voice of thunder had uttered them. It seemed louder than before, and he grasped more fully the great truth which it announced. What folly, thought he, to seek an indulgence from the Church, which can last me but a few years, when God sends me in his Word an indulgence that will last me for ever! How idle to toil at these performances, when God is willing to acquit me of all my sins not as so much wages for so much service, but freely, in the way of believing upon his Son! "The just shall live by faith."

From this time the doctrine of justification by faith alone stood out before Luther. He held that it was by departing from this doctrine that the Church had fallen into bondage, and had come to groan under penances and works of self-righteousness. In no other way, he believed, could the Church find her way back to truth and liberty than by returning to this doctrine. This was the road to true reformation.

When he turned his back on Rome, he turned his face toward the Bible. The Bible henceforward was to be to Luther the true city of God. Luther's stay in Rome did not extend over two weeks, but in that short time he had learned lessons not to be forgotten all his life long. The grace he had looked to find at Rome he had indeed found there, but in the Word of God, not in the throne of the Pope. The latter was a fountain that had ceased to send forth the Water of Life; so, turning from this empty cistern, he went back to Wittenberg and the study of the scriptures.

The year of his return was 1512. It was yet five years to the breaking out of the Reformation in Germany. These years were spent by Luther in the arduous labors of preacher, professor, and confessor at Wittenberg. A few months after his return he received the degree of Doctor in Divinity, and this was not without its influence upon the mind of the Reformer. On that occasion Luther took an oath upon the Bible to study, propagate, and defend the faith contained in the Holy Scriptures. He looked upon himself henceforward as the sworn knight of the reformed faith. Taking farewell of philosophy, from which in truth he was glad to escape, he turned to the Bible as his life-work.

We must again turn our eyes upon Rome. The warlike Julius II, who held the tiara at the time of Luther's visit, was now dead, and Leo X occupied the Vatican. Leo was of the family of the Medici, and he brought to the Papal chair all the humanistic tastes and passions which distinguished the Medicean chiefs. He was refined in manners, but sensual and voluptuous in heart, he patronized the fine arts, affected a taste for letters, and delighted in pomps and shows. His court was perhaps the most brilliant in Europe. No elegance, no amusement, no pleasure was forbidden admission into it. The fact that it was an ecclesiastical court was permitted to be no restraint upon its ample freedom. It was the chosen home of art, of painting, of music, of revels, and of masquerades.

The Pontiff was not in the least burdened with religious beliefs and convictions. To have such was the fashion of neither his house nor his age. His office as Pontiff, it is true, connected him with "a gigantic fable" which had come down from early times; but to have exploded that fable would have been to dissolve the chair in which he sat, and the throne that brought him so much magnificence and power. Leo was, therefore, content to

vent his skepticism in the well-known sneer, "What a profitable affair this fable of Christ has been to us!" To this had it come! Christianity was now worked solely as a source of profit to the Popes.

Leo, combining, as we have said, the love of art with that of pleasure, conceived the idea of beautifying Rome. His family had adorned Florence with the noblest edifices. Its glory was spoken of in all countries, and men came from afar to gaze upon its monuments. Leo would do for the Eternal City what his ancestors had done for the capital of Etruria. War, and the slovenliness or penury of the Popes had permitted the Church of St. Peter to fall into disrepair. He would clear away the ruinous fabric, and replace it with a pile more glorious than any that Christendom contained. But to execute such a project millions would be needed. Where were they to come from? The shows or entertainments with which Leo had gratified the vanity of his courtiers, and amused the indolence of the Romans, had emptied his exchequer. But the magnificent conception must not be permitted to fall through from want of money. If the earthly treasury of the Pope was empty, his spiritual treasury was full; and there was wealth enough there to rear a temple that would eclipse all existing structures, and be worthy of being the metropolitan church of Christendom. In short, it was resolved to open a special sale of indulgences in all the countries of Europe. This traffic would enrich all parties. From the Seven Hills would flow a river of spiritual blessing. To Rome would flow back a river of gold.

Arrangements were made for opening this great market in 1517. The license to sell in the different countries of Europe was disposed of to the highest bidder, and the price was paid beforehand to the Pontiff. The indulgences in Germany were farmed out to Albert, Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg. The archbishop was in Germany what Leo X was in Rome. He loved to see himself surrounded with a brilliant court; he denied himself no pleasure; was profuse in entertainments; never went abroad without a long retinue of servants; and, as a consequence, was greatly in want of money. Besides, he owed to the Pope for his pall – some said, 26,000, others, 30,000 florins. There could be no harm in diverting a little of the wealth that was about to flow to Rome, into channels that might profit himself. The bargain was struck, and the archbishop sought out a suitable person to perambulate Germany, and preach up the indulgences. He found a man every way suited to his purpose. This was a Dominican monk, named John Tetzel. He had filled the odious office of inquisitor, and having added thereto a huckstering trade in indulgences, he had acquired a large experience in that sort of business. He had been convicted of a shameful crime at Innspruck, and sentenced to be put into a sack and drowned; but powerful intercession being made for him, he was reprieved, and lived to help unconsciously in the overthrow of the system that had nourished him.

Tetzel lacked no quality necessary for success in his scandalous occupation. He had the voice of a town-crier, and the eloquence of a mountebank. This latter quality enabled him to paint in the most glowing colors the marvelous virtues of the wares which he offered for sale. The resources of his invention, the power of his effrontery, and the efficacy of his indulgences were all alike limitless.

This man made a progress through Germany. The line of the procession as it moved from

place to place might be traced at a distance by the great red cross, which was carried by Tetzel himself, and on which were suspended the arms of the Pope. In front of the procession, on a velvet cushion, was borne the Pontiff's bull of grace; in the rear came the mules laden with bales of pardons, to be given, not to those who had penitence in the heart, but to those who had money in the hand.

When the procession approached a town it was announced to the inhabitants that "The Grace of God and of the Holy Father was at their gates." The welcome accorded was commonly such as the extraordinary honor was fitted to draw forth. The gates were opened, and the tall red cross, with all the spiritual riches of which it was the sign, passed in, followed by a long and imposing array of the ecclesiastical and civic authorities, the religious orders, the various trades, and the whole population of the place, which had come out to welcome the great pardon-monger. The procession advanced amid the beating of drums, the waving of flags, the blaze of tapers, and the pealing of bells.

When he entered a city, Tetzel and his company went straight to the cathedral. The crowd pressed in and filled the church. The cross was set up in front of the high altar, a strong iron box was put down beside it, in which the money received for pardons was deposited, and Tetzel, in the garb of the Dominicans, mounting the pulpit began to set forth with stentorian voice the incomparable merit of his wares. He bade the people think what it was that had come to them. Never before in their times, nor in the times of their fathers, had there been a day of privilege like this. Never before had the gates of Paradise been opened so widely. "Press in now: come and buy while the market lasts," shouted the Dominican; "should that cross be taken down the market will close, heaven will depart, and then you will begin to knock, and to bewail your folly in neglecting to avail yourselves of blessings which shall then have gone beyond your reach." So in effect did Tetzel harangue the crowd. "Indulgences are the most precious and the most noble of God's gifts," said Tetzel. "But more than this," said Tetzel, for he had not as yet disclosed the whole wonderful virtues of his merchandise, "indulgences avail not only for the living but for the dead." So had Boniface VIII enacted two centuries before; and Tetzel goes on to the particular application of the dogma. "Priest, noble, merchant, wife, youth, maiden, do you not hear your parents and your other friends who are dead, and who cry from the bottom of the abyss: 'We are suffering horrible torments! A trifling alms would deliver us; you can give it, and you will not?'" "At the very instant," continues Tetzel, "that the money rattles at the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory, and flies liberated to heaven." No argument was spared by the monk which could prevail with the people to receive his pardons; in other words, to fill his iron box. From the fires of purgatory – dreadful realities to men of that age, for even Luther as yet believed in such a place – Tetzel offered release.

Day by day great crowds repaired to this market, where for a little earthly gold men might buy all the blessings of heaven. Tetzel and his indulgences became the one topic of talk in Germany. The matter was discussed in all circles, from the palace and the university to the market-place and the wayside inn. The more sensible portion of the nation were shocked at the affair. That a little money should atone for the guilt and efface the stain of the most enormous crimes, was contrary to the natural justice of mankind.

That the vilest characters should be placed on a level with the virtuous and the orderly, seemed a blow at the foundation of morals – an unhooking of society. The Papal key, instead of unlocking the fountains of grace and holiness, had opened the flood-gates of impiety and vice, and men trembled at the deluge of licentiousness which seemed ready to rush in and overflow the land. Those who had some knowledge of the Word of God viewed the matter in even a worse light. They knew that the pardon of sin was the sole prerogative of God: that he had delegated that power to no mortal, and that those who gathered round the red cross of Tetzal and bought his pardons were cheated of their money and their souls at the same time. Christianity, instead of a source of purity, appeared to be a fountain of pollution; and, from being the guardian and nurse of virtue, seemed to have become the patron and promoter of all ungodliness.

The thoughts of others took another direction. They looked at the "power of the keys" under the new light shed upon it by the indulgences, and began to doubt the legitimacy of that which was now being so flagrantly abused. What, asked they, are we to think of the Pope as a man of humanity and mercy? One day a miner of Schneeberg met a seller of indulgences. "Is it true," he asked, "that we can, by throwing a penny into the chest, ransom a soul from purgatory?" "It is so," replied the indulgence-vendor. "Ah, then," resumed the miner, "what a merciless man the Pope must be, since for want of a wretched penny he leaves a poor soul crying in the flames so long!" Luther embodied in his Theses on Indulgences what was a very general sentiment, when he asked, "Why does not the Pope deliver at once all the souls from purgatory by a holy charity and on account of their great wretchedness, since he delivers so many from love of perishable money and of the Cathedral of St. Peter?" It was all very well to have a fine building at Rome, thought the people of Germany, but to open the gates of that doleful prison in which so many miserable beings live in flames, and for once make purgatory tenantless, would be a nobler monument of the grace and munificence of the Pope, than the most sumptuous temple that he can by any possibility rear in the Eternal City.

Meanwhile Friar John Tetzal and Pope Leo X went on laboring with all their might, though wholly unwittingly and unintentionally, to pave the way for Luther. If anything could have deepened the impression produced by the scandals of Tetzal's trade, it was the scandals of his life. He was expending, day by day, and all day long, much breath in the Church's service, extolling the merit of her indulgences, and when night came he much needed refreshment: and he took it to his heart's content. "The collectors led a disorderly life," says Sarpi; "they squandered in taverns, gambling-houses, and places of ill-fame all that the people had saved from their necessities."

As regards Leo X, when the stream of gold from the countries beyond the Alps began to flow, his joy was great. Never again would he have cause to bewail an empty treasury. Men would never cease to sin, and so long as they continued to sin they would need pardon; and where could they go for pardon if not to the Church – in other words, to himself? He only, of all men on the earth, held the key. He might say with an ancient monarch, "Mine hand hath found as a nest the riches of the nations, and as one gathereth eggs so have I gathered all the earth." Thus Leo went on from day to day, building St. Peter's, but pulling down the Papacy.

The great red cross, the stentorian voice of Tetzal, and the frequent chink of money in his iron chest, had compelled the nations of Germany to think Rome had come too near these nations. While she remained at a distance, separated from them by the Alps, the Teutonic peoples had bowed down in worship before her; but when she presented herself as a hawker of spiritual wares for earthly pelf, when she stood before them in the person of the monk who had so narrowly escaped being tied up in a sack and flung into the river Inn, for his own sins, before he took to pardoning the sins of others, the spell was broken. But as yet the German nations only thought; they had not given utterance to their thoughts. A few murmurs might be heard, but no powerful voice had yet spoken.

Meanwhile, Tetzal, traveling from town to town, eating of the best at the hostelries, and paying his bills in drafts on Paradise; pressing carriers and others into his service for the transport of his merchandise, and recompensing them for the labor of themselves and their mules by letters of indulgence, approached within four miles of Luther.

Luther, who acted as confessor as well as preacher, soon discovered the moral havoc which Tetzal's pardons were working. For we must bear in mind that Luther still believed in the Church, and in obedience to her commands exacted confession and penance on the part of his flock, though only as preparatives, and not as the price, of that free salvation which he taught, comes through the merit of Christ, and is appropriated by faith alone. One day, as he sat in the confessional, some citizens of Wittemberg came before him, and confessed having committed thefts, adulteries, and other heinous sins. "You must abandon your evil courses," said Luther, "otherwise I cannot absolve you." To his surprise and grief, they replied that they had no thought of leaving off their sins; that this was not in the least necessary, inasmuch as these sins were already pardoned, and they themselves secured against the punishment of them. The deluded people would thereupon pull out the indulgence papers of Tetzal, and show them in testimony of their innocence. Luther could only tell them that these papers were worthless, that they must repent, and be forgiven of God, otherwise they should perish everlastingly.

Denied absolution, and sore at losing both their money and their hope of heaven, these persons hastened back to Tetzal, and informed him that a monk in Wittemberg was making light of his indulgences, and was warning the people against them as deceptions. Tetzal literally foamed with rage, and bellowing more loudly than ever, poured out a torrent of anathemas against the man who had dared to speak disparagingly of the pardons of the Pope. To energetic words, Tetzal added significant acts. Kindling a fire in the market-place of Juterbock, he gave a sign of what would be done to the man who should obstruct his holy work. The Pope, he said, had given him authority to commit all such heretics to the flames.

Nothing terrified by Tetzal's angry words, or by the fire that blazed so harmlessly in the market-place of Juterbock, Luther became yet more strenuous in his opposition. He condemned the indulgences in his place in the university. He wrote to the Prince Archbishop of Mainz, praying him to interpose his authority and stop a proceeding that was a scandal to religion and a snare to the souls of men. He little knew that he was addressing the very man who had farmed these indulgences. He even believed the Pope

to be ignorant, if not of the indulgences, of the frightful excesses that attended the sale of them. From the pulpit, with all affection but with all fidelity, he warned his flock not to take part in so great a wickedness. God, he said, demands a satisfaction for sin, but not from the sinner; Christ has made satisfaction for the sinner, and God pardons him freely. Offenses against herself the Church can pardon, but not offenses against God. Tetzels indulgences cannot open the door of Paradise, and they who believe in them believe in a lie, and unless they repent shall die in their sins.

In this Luther differed more widely from his Church than he was then aware of. She holds with Tetzels rather than with Luther. She not merely remits ecclesiastical censures, she pardons sin, and lifts off the wrath of God from the soul.

We have here a narrow stage but a great conflict. From the pulpit at Wittenberg is preached a free salvation. At Jüterbock stands the red cross, where heaven is sold for money. Within a radius of a few miles is fought the same battle which is soon to cover the face of Christendom. The two systems – salvation by Christ and salvation by Rome – are here brought face to face; the one helps sharply to define the other, not in their doctrines only, but in their issues, the holiness which the one demands and the licentiousness which the other sanctions, that men may mark the contrast between the two, and make their choice between the gospel of Wittenberg and the indulgence-market of Jüterbock. Already Protestantism has obtained a territorial foothold, where it is unfurling its banner and enlisting disciples.

Tetzels went on with the sale of his indulgences, and Luther felt himself driven to more decisive measures. The Elector Frederick had lately built the castle-church of Wittenberg, and had spared neither labor nor money in collecting relics to enrich and beautify it. These relics, in their settings of gold and precious stones, the priests were accustomed to show to the people on the festival of All Saints, the 1st of November; and crowds came to Wittenberg to nourish their piety by the sight of the precious objects, and earn the indulgence offered to all who should visit the church on that day. The eve of the festival (October 31st) was now come. The street of Wittenberg was thronged with pilgrims. At the hour of noon, Luther, who had given no hint to any one of what he purposed, sallied forth, and joined the stream that was flowing to the castle-church, which stood close by the eastern gate. Pressing through the crowd, and drawing forth a paper, he proceeds to nail it upon the door of the church. The strokes of his hammer draw the crowd around him, and they begin eagerly to read. What is on the paper? It contains ninety-five "Theses" or propositions on the doctrine of indulgences. We select the following as comprehensive of the spirit and scope of the whole: –

VI. The Pope cannot remit any condemnation, but can only declare and confirm the remission that God himself has given, except only in cases that belong to him.

If he does otherwise, the condemnation continues the same.

VIII. The laws of ecclesiastical penance can be imposed only on the living, and in no wise respect the dead.

XXI. The commissaries of indulgences are in error, when they say that by the Papal indulgence a man is delivered from every punishment and is saved.

XXV. The same power that the Pope has over purgatory in the Church at large, is possessed by every bishop and every curate in his own particular diocese and parish.

XXXII. Those who fancy themselves sure of salvation by indulgences will go to perdition along with those who teach them so.

XXXVII. Every true Christian, dead or living, is a partaker of all the blessings of Christ, or of the Church, by the gift of God, and without any letter of indulgence.

XXXVIII. Yet we must not despise the Pope's distributive and pardoning power, for his pardon is a declaration of God's pardon.

XLIX. We should teach Christians that the Pope's indulgence is good if we put no confidence in it, but that nothing is more hurtful if it diminishes our piety.

L. We should teach Christians that if the Pope knew of the extortions of the preachers of indulgences, he would rather the Mother Church of St. Peter were burned and reduced to ashes, than see it built up with the skin, the flesh, and the bones of his flock.

LI. We should teach Christians that the Pope (as it is his duty) would distribute his own money to the poor, whom the indulgence-sellers are now stripping of their last farthing, even were he compelled to sell the Mother Church of St. Peter.

LII. To hope to be saved by indulgences is a lying and an empty hope, although even the commissary of indulgences – nay, further, the Pope himself – should pledge their souls to guarantee it.

LIII. They are the enemies of the Pope and of Jesus Christ who, by reason of the preaching of indulgences, forbid the preaching of the Word of God.

LXII. The true and precious treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.

LXXVI. The Papal pardons cannot remit even the least of venal sins as regards the guilt.

These propositions Luther undertook to defend next day in the university against all who might choose to impugn them. No one appeared.

In this paper Luther struck at more than the abuses of indulgences. Underneath was a principle subversive of the whole Papal system. In the midst of some remaining darkness – for he still reverences the Pope, believes in purgatory, and speaks of the merits of the saints – he preaches the Gospel of a free salvation. The "Theses" put God's gift in sharp antagonism to the Pope's gift. The one is free, the other has to be bought. God's pardon does not need the Pope's indorsement, but the Pope's forgiveness, unless followed by God's, is of no avail; it is a cheat, a delusion. Such is the doctrine of the "Theses." That mightiest of all prerogatives, the power of pardoning sins and so of saving men's souls, is taken from the "Church" and given back to God.

The day on which the monk of Wittemberg posted up his "Theses," occupies a distinguished place among the great days of history. The propositions of Luther preached to all Christendom that God does not sell pardon, but bestows it as a free gift on the ground of the death of his Son. Luther's eye did not extend to remote countries and times; he looked only at what was before him – the professors and students of the

university; his flock in Wittenberg in danger of being ensnared; the crowd of pilgrims assembled to earn an indulgence – and to the neighboring towns and parts of Germany. These he hoped to influence. But far beyond these modest limits was spread the fame of Luther's "Theses." They contained truth, and truth is light, and light must necessarily diffuse itself, and penetrate the darkness on every side. The "Theses" were found to be as applicable to Christendom as to Wittenberg, and as hostile to the great indulgence-market at Rome as to the little one at Jüterbock. Now was seen the power of that instrumentality which God had prepared beforehand for this emergency – the printing-press. Copied with the hand, how slowly would these propositions have traveled, and how limited the number of persons who would have read them! But the printing-press, multiplying copies, sowed them like snow-flakes over Saxony. Other printing-presses set to work, and speedily there was no country in Europe where the "Theses" of the monk of Wittenberg were not as well known as in Saxony.

The "Theses" were the one topic of conversation everywhere – in all circles, and in all sorts of places. They were discussed by the learned in the universities, and by the monks in their cells. In the market-place, in the shop, and in the tavern, men paused and talked together of the bold act and the new doctrine of the monk of Wittenberg. A copy was procured and read by Leo X in the Vatican.

The very darkness of the age helped to extend the circulation and the knowledge of the "Theses." The man who kindles a bonfire on a mountain-top by day will have much to do to attract the eyes of even a single parish. He who kindles his signal amid the darkness of night will arouse a whole kingdom.

No one was more surprised at the effects produced than Luther himself. That a sharp discussion should spring up in the university; that the convents and colleges of Saxony should be agitated; that some of his friends should approve and others condemn, was what he had anticipated; but that all Christendom should be shaken as by an earthquake, was an issue he had never dreamed of. Yet this was what had happened.

Tetzel by this time had broken up his encampment at Jüterbock – having no more sins to pardon and no more money to gather – and had gone to the wealthier locality of Frankfort-on-the-Oder. He had planted the red cross and the iron box on one of the more fashionable promenades of the city. Thither the rumor of the Wittenberg "Theses" followed him. He saw at a glance the mischief the monk had done him, and made a show of fight after his own fashion. Full of rage, he kindled a great fire, and as he could not burn Luther in person he burned his "Theses." This feat accomplished, he rubbed up what little theology he knew, and attempted a reply to the doctor of Wittenberg in a set of counter-propositions.

But soon abler antagonists entered the lists. The first to present himself was Sylvester Mazzolini, of Prierio. He was Master of the Sacred Palace at Rome, and discharged the office of censor. The controversy between Luther and Prierio, as raised by the latter, turned on "the rule of faith." Surely it was not altogether of chance that this fundamental point was debated at this early stage. It put in a clear light the two very different

foundations on which Protestantism and the Papacy respectively stood.

Prierio's performance took the form of a dialogue. He laid down certain great principles touching the constitution of the Church, the authority vested in it, and the obedience due by all Christians to that authority. The universal Church essentially, said Prierio, is a congregation for worship of all believers; virtually it is the Roman Church; representatively it is the college of cardinals; concentratively and organically it is the supreme Pontiff, who is the head of the Church, but in a different sense from Christ. Further he maintained that, as the Church universal cannot err in determining questions pertaining to faith and morals, neither can the organs through which the Church elaborates and expresses its decisions – the Councils and the supreme Pontiff – err. These principles he applied practically, thus: "Whoever does not rely on the teaching of the Roman Church and of the Roman Pontiff, as the infallible rule of faith, from which the Holy Scriptures themselves derive their strength and their authority, is a heretic."

It is curious to note that already, in this first exchange of arguments between Protestantism and the Papacy, the controversy was narrowed to this one great question: Whom is man to believe, God or the Church? – in other words, have we a Divine or a human foundation for our faith? The Bible is the sole infallible authority, said the men of Wittenberg. No, said this voice from the Vatican, the sole infallible authority is the Church. The Bible is a dead letter. Not a line of it can men understand: its true sense is utterly beyond their apprehension. In the Church – that is, in the priests – is lodged the power of infallibly perceiving the true sense of scripture, and of revealing it to Christians.

Prierio boasted that he had spent only three days over his performance: Luther occupied only two in his reply. The doctor of Wittenberg placed the Bible of the living God over against the Bible of Prierio, as the foundation of men's faith. The fundamental position taken in his answer was expressed in the words of Holy Writ: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Prierio had centered all the faith, obedience, and hopes of men in the Pope: Luther places them on that Rock which is Christ. Thus, with every day, and with each new antagonist, the true nature of the controversy, and the momentous issues which it had raised, were coming more clearly and broadly into view.

Another combatant of Luther was Hochstraten, an inquisitor at Cologne. This disputant belonged to an order unhappily more familiar with the torch than with the pen; and it was not long till Hochstraten showed that his fingers, unused to the one, itched to grasp the other. He lost his temper at the very outset, and called for a scaffold. If, replied Luther, nothing daunted by this threat, it is the faggot that is to decide the controversy, the sooner I am burned the better, otherwise the monks may have cause to rue it.

But Luther's most notable combatant was Dr. Eck, professor of scholastic theology at Ingolstadt. He rose up in the fullness of his erudition and of his fame, to extinguish the monk of Wittenberg. Though a scholar, the professor of Ingolstadt did not account it beneath him to employ abuse, and resort to insinuation. "It is the Bohemian poison which you are circulating," said he to Luther, hoping to awaken against him the old prejudice

which still animated the Germans against Huss and the Reformers of Bohemia. So far as Eck condescended to argue, his weapons, taken from the Aristotelian armory, were adapted for a scholastic tournament only; they were useless in a real battle, like that in which he now engaged. They were speedily shivered in his hand. "Would you not hold it impudence," asked Luther, meeting Dr. Eck on his own ground, "in one to maintain, as a part of the philosophy of Aristotle, what one found it impossible to prove Aristotle had ever taught? You grant it. It is the most impudent of all impudence to affirm that to be a part of Christianity which Christ never taught." The doctor of Ingolstadt sank into silence. One after another the opponents of the Reformer retire from Luther's presence discomfited.

The eyes of the Pope and the adherents of the Papacy now began to open to the real importance of the movement inaugurated at Wittenberg. They had regarded it slightly, almost contemptuously, as but a quarrel amongst that quarrelsome generation the monks, which had broken out in a remote province of their dominions, and which would speedily subside and leave Rome unshaken. But, so far from dying out, the movement was every day deepening its seat and widening its sphere; it was allying itself with great spiritual and moral forces; it was engendering new thoughts in the minds of men; already a phalanx of disciples, created and continually multiplied by its own energies, stood around it, and, unless speedily checked, the movement would work, they began to fear, the downfall of their system.

His "Theses" had been mistaken or misrepresented by ignorant or prejudiced persons; he resolved to explain them in clearer language. He now published what he styled his "Resolutions," in which, with admirable moderation and firmness, he softens the harder and lights up the darker parts of his "Theses," but retracts nothing of their teaching.

In this new publication he maintains that every true penitent possesses God's forgiveness, and has no need to buy an indulgence; that the stock of merit from which indulgences are dispensed is a pure chimera, existing only in the brain of the indulgence-monger; that the power of the Pope goes no farther than to enable him to declare the pardon which God has already bestowed, and that the rule of faith is the Holy Scriptures.

Rome, at this crisis, had need to be decided and prompt; she strangely vacillated and blundered. Leo X was a skeptic, and skepticism is fatal to earnestness and rigor. The Emperor Maximilian was more alive to the danger that impended over the Papal See than Leo. He was nearer the cradle of the movement, and beheld with dismay the spread of the Lutheran doctrines in his own dominions. He wrote energetically, if mayhap he might rouse the Pope, who was slumbering in his palace, careless of everything save his literary and artistic treasures, while this tempest was gathering over him. The Diet of the Empire was at that moment (1518) sitting at Augsburg. The emperor sought to inflame the members of the Diet by pronouncing a furious philippic against Luther, including the patrons and defenders whom the Reformer had found among the powerful. The Elector Frederick of Saxony was especially meant. It helped to augment the chagrin of the emperor, that mainly through the influence of Frederick he had been thwarted in carrying a project through the Diet, on which he was much set as tending to the aggrandizement of

his dynasty — the election of his grandson, the future Charles V, to succeed him in the Empire. But if Frederick herein did the emperor a disfavor, he won for himself greater consideration at the court of the Pope, for there were few things that Leo X dreaded more than the union of half the scepters of Europe in one hand. Meanwhile the energetic letter of Maximilian was not without effect, and it was resolved to lay vigorous hold upon the Wittenberg movement. On the 7th August, 1518, Luther was summoned to answer at Rome, within sixty days, to the charges preferred against him. To have gone to Rome would have been to march into his grave. But the peril of staying was scarcely less than the peril of going. He would be condemned as contumacious, and the Pope would follow up the excommunication by striking him, if not with his own hand, with that of the emperor. The powers of earth, headed by the King of the Seven Hills, were rising up against Luther. He had no visible defense — no acknowledged protector. There seemed no escape for the unbefriended monk.

The University of Wittenberg, of which Luther was the soul, made earnest intercession for him at the court of the Vatican, dwelling with special emphasis upon the unsuspected character of his doctrine, and the blameless manners of his life, not reflecting, apparently, how little weight either plea would carry in the quarter where it was urged. A more powerful intercessor was found for Luther in the Elector Frederick, who pleaded that it was a right of the Germans to have all ecclesiastical questions decided upon their own soil, and urged in accordance therewith that some fit person should be deputed to hear the cause in Germany, mentioning at the same time his brother-elect, the Archbishop of Treves, as one every way qualified to discharge this office. The peril was passed more easily than could have been anticipated. The Pope remembered that Frederick of Saxony had done him a service at the Diet of Augsburg, and he thought it not improbable that he might need his good offices in the future. And, further, his legate-a-latere, now in Germany, was desirous to have the adjudication of Luther's case, never doubting that he should be able to extinguish heresy in Germany, and that the glory of such a work would compensate for his mortification at the Diet of Augsburg, where, having failed to engage the princes in a war against the Turk, he was consequently without a pretext for levying a tax upon their kingdoms. The result was that the Pope issued a brief, on the 23rd of August, empowering his legate, Cardinal de Vio, to summon Luther before him, and pronounce judgment in his case. Leo, while appearing to oblige both Frederick and the cardinal, did not show all his hand. This transference of the cause to Germany was but another way, the Pope hoped, of bringing Luther to Rome.

Thomas de Vio, Cardinal St. Sixti, but better known as Cardinal Cajetan, cited the doctor of Wittenberg to appear before him at Augsburg.

A very few days before Luther's departure to appear before the cardinal, Philip Melancthon arrived at Wittenberg, to fill the Greek chair in its university. He was appointed to this post by the Elector Frederick, having been strongly recommended by the famous Reuchlin. His fame had preceded him, and his arrival was awaited with no little expectations by the Wittenberg professors. But when he appeared amongst them, his exceedingly youthful appearance, his small figure, his shy manners, and diffident air, but ill corresponded with their preconceptions of him. But in due time Melancthon would

prove an important companion of Luther.

Luther now stood on the threshold of his stormy career. Luther departed for Augsburg, amid the trembling of his friends, to appear before the Legate of Rome. He might be waylaid on the road, or his journey might end in a Roman dungeon. Luther himself did not share these apprehensions. He set out with intrepid heart. It was a long way to Augsburg, and it had all to be gone on foot, for whatever the conflict had brought the monk, it had not brought him wealth. The Elector Frederick, however, gave him money for his journey, but not a safe-conduct. This last, he said, was unnecessary. The fate of John Huss, which many called to mind, did not justify his confidence.

Had Luther come to Augsburg a few weeks earlier he would have found Augsburg crowded with princes and counts, among whom would have been found some willing to defend him; but now all had taken their departure, the Diet being at an end, and no one remained save the Roman Legate, whose secret purpose it was that Luther should unconditionally submit, or otherwise never depart alive out of those gates within which, to De Vio's delight, he had now entered.

Augsburg was one of the chief cities of the Empire, and Luther was encouraged by finding that even here his doctrines had made considerable way. Many of the more honorable councilors of the city waited upon him, invited him to their tables, inquired into his matters; and when they learned that he had come to Augsburg without a safe-conduct, they could not help expressing their astonishment at his boldness — "a gentle name," said Luther, "for rashness." These friends with one accord entreated him on no account to venture into the legate's presence without a safe-conduct, and they undertook to procure one for him from the emperor, who was still in the neighborhood hunting. Luther deemed it prudent to follow their advice; they knew De Vio better than he did, and their testimony regarding him was not assuring.

At length a safe-conduct was obtained, and the 11th of October was fixed for Luther's appearance before De Vio. Many pressed in after him to the hall of audience, to be the witnesses of his submission, for however courageous at Wittenberg, they never doubted that the monk would be pliant enough when he stood before the Roman purple. The customary ceremonies over, a pause ensued. The monk and the cardinal looked at each other in silence: Luther because, having been cited, he expected Cajetan to speak first; and the cardinal because he deemed it impossible that Luther would appear in his presence with any other intention than that of retracting. He was to find that in this he was mistaken.

Finding that the legate still kept silence, Luther spoke: "Most worthy Father, in obedience to the summons of his Papal Holiness, and in compliance with the orders of my gracious Lord the Elector of Saxony, I appear before you as a submissive and dutiful son of the Holy Christian Church, and acknowledge that I have published the propositions and theses ascribed to me. I am ready to listen most obediently to my accusation, and if I have erred, to submit to instruction in the truth."

De Vio thought this an auspicious commencement. A submission was not far off. So, putting on a very gracious air, and speaking with condescending kindness, he said that he had only three things to ask of his dear son: first, that he would retract his errors; secondly, that he would abstain in future from promulgating his opinions; and thirdly, that he would avoid whatever might tend to disturb the peace of the Church.

Luther craved that the Papal brief might be read, in virtue of which the legate had full powers to treat of this matter.

The courtiers opened their eyes in astonishment at the monk's boldness; but the cardinal, concealing his anger, intimated with a wave of his hand that this request could not be granted.

"Then," replied Luther, "deign, most reverend Father, to point out to me wherein I have erred." The courtiers were still more astonished, but Cajetan remained unruffled. The legate took up the "Theses" of Luther: "Observe," said he, "in the seventh proposition you deny that the Sacrament can profit one unless he has faith; and in your fifty-eighth proposition you deny that the merits of Christ form part of that treasure from which the Pope grants indulgences to the faithful."

"That the man who receives the holy Sacrament must have faith in the grace offered him," said Luther, "is a truth I never can and never will revoke."

"Whether you will or no," returned the legate, getting angry, "I must have your recantation this very day, or for this one error I shall condemn all your propositions."

"But," replied the professor of Wittenberg, with equal decision, though with great courteousness, "I demand proof from scripture that I am wrong; it is on scripture that my views rest."

But no proof from scripture could the Reformer get. The cardinal could only repeat the common-places of Rome, re-affirm the doctrine of the *opus operatum*, and quote one of the Extravagants of Clement VI. Luther, indignant at seeing what stress the legate laid on a Papal decree, exclaimed, "I cannot admit any such constitution in proof of matters so weighty as those in debate. These interpretations put scripture to the torture." "Do you not know," rejoined De Vio, "that the Pope has authority and power over these things?" "Save scripture," said Luther eagerly.

"Scripture!" said the cardinal derisively, "the Pope is above scripture, and above Councils."

Luther saw plainly that at this rate they would never arrive at a settlement of the matter. The legate sat in state, treating the man before him with affected condescension, but real contempt. When Luther quoted scripture in proof of his doctrine, the only answer he received from the cardinal was a shrug of his shoulders, or a derisive laugh. The legate, despite his promise to reason the matter out on the foundation of the Word of God, would

not, or perhaps could not, meet Luther on that ground. He kept exclusively by the decretals and the schoolmen. Glad, perhaps, to escape for the present from a controversy which was not so manageable as he had hoped to find it, he offered to give the doctor of Wittemberg a day for deliberation, but intimated at the same time that he would accept of nothing but a retraction. So ended the first interview.

On returning to his convent his delight was great to find his valued friend Staupitz, the Vicar-General of the Augustines, who had followed him to Augsburg, in the hope of being serviceable to him at this crisis. On the morning when Luther returned to his second interview with the cardinal, the Vicar-General and four imperial councilors accompanied him, along with many other friends, a notary, and witnesses. After the customary obeisance, Luther read a paper, protesting that he honored and followed the Holy Roman Church; that he submitted himself to the judgment and determination of that Church; that he was ready here present to answer in writing whatever objection the legate of the Pope might produce against him; and, moreover, that he was willing to submit his "Theses" to the judgment of the Imperial Universities of Basle, Fribourg, and Louvain, and, if these were not enough, of Paris — from of old ever the most Christian, and in theology ever the most flourishing university.

The legate evidently had some difficulty in knowing what to reply to these reasonable and manly proposals. He tried to conceal his embarrassment under an affected pity for the monk. "Leave off," he said, in accents of great mildness, "these senseless counsels, and return to your sound mind. Retract, my son, retract." Luther once more appealed to the authority of scripture, but De Vio becoming somewhat ruffled, the conference ended, after Staupitz had craved and obtained leave for Luther to put his views in writing.

At the third and last interview, the doctor of Wittemberg read a full statement of his views on all the points which had been under consideration. He maintained all his former positions, largely fortifying them by quotations from Augustine and other early Fathers, but more especially from Holy Writ. The cardinal could not help, even on the judgment-seat, displaying his irritation and chagrin. Drawing himself up in his robes, he received the "declaration" with a look of contempt, and pronounced it "mere words," "a long phylactery;" but said that he would send the paper to Rome. Meanwhile the legate threatened him with the penalties enacted by the Pope unless he retracted.

This was a great crisis in the history of Protestantism, and we breathe more freely when we find it safely passed. Luther had not yet sounded the Papal dogmas to the bottom. He had not as yet those clear and well-defined views to which fuller investigation conducted him. He still believed the office of Pope to be of Divine appointment, and while condemning the errors of the man, was disposed to bow to the authority of his office.

There was risk of concessions which would have hampered him in his future course, or have totally wrecked his cause. From this he was saved, partly by his loyalty to his own convictions, partly also by the perception on the part of the theologians of Rome that the element of "faith," on which Luther so strenuously insisted, constituted an essential and

eternal difference between his system and theirs. It substituted a Divine for a human agency, the operation of the Holy Spirit for the opus operatum.

Two days had passed since the legate had bidden Luther "be gone, and see his face no more, unless he changed his mind." After leaving the cardinal's presence, Luther wrote him a letter in which, although he retracted nothing, he expressed great respect and submission. The cardinal returned no answer to this. What did his silence mean? "It bodes no good," said Luther's friends; "he is concocting some plot with the emperor; we must be beforehand with him."

In fact, Cajetan did not need to consult the emperor or any one else. He had received instructions from his master at Rome in view of the possible miscarriage of his mission. If he delayed to put these instructions in force, it was because he thought he had snared his victim: the walls of Augsburg had shut him in.

The trap was not quite so sure as the cardinal deemed it. Mounted on a horse, provided for him by his friends, a trusty guide by his side, Luther is traversing before dawn the silent streets of Augsburg. He is escaping from the cardinal. He approaches a small gate in the city walls. A friendly hand opens it, and he passes out into the open country.

Even before the summons to appear before De Vio had been put into Luther's hands, his cause had been adjudged and himself condemned as a heretic in a Papal court, that of Jerome, Bishop of Ascoli. Of this Luther knew nothing when he set out for Augsburg. The danger was passed before he knew its full extent; but when he saw it he gave thanks with his whole soul to God for his escape. The angel of the Lord had encamped round about him and delivered him.

The rumor spread through Germany that the monk had held his own before the cardinal, and the inhabitants of the villages and towns in his route turned out to congratulate him on his victory. Their joy was the greater inasmuch as their hopes had been but faint that he should ever return. Germany had triumphed in Luther. Proud Italy, who sent her dogmas and edicts across the Alps, to be swallowed without examination, and who followed them by her tax-gatherers, had received a check. That haughty and oppressive Power had begun to fall, and the dawn of deliverance had broke for the Northern nations.

Luther re-entered Wittenberg preceding the anniversary of that on which he had posted up his "Theses." With the growing renown of Luther grew the fame of the university, and the Elector Frederick saw with joy the prosperity of a seminary in which he took so deep an interest. This helped to draw him to the side of the Reformer. Luther resumed, with heart and soul, his labors in his chair. He strove to forget what Rome might be hatching; he knew that trouble was not far off; but meanwhile he went on with his work, being all the more anxious to make the best use of the interval of quiet, the more he felt that it would be short.

It was short indeed. Frederick of Saxony soon received a letter from Cardinal Cajetan, giving his version of the interviews at Augsburg, and imploring the elector no longer to

sully the fame of his name and the glory of his house by protecting a heretic, whom the tribunals of Rome were prosecuting, and of whom and of whose affairs he had now and for ever washed his hands. Frederick resolved not to abandon Luther. He knew his virtues, though he did not understand his doctrines, and he knew the grievances that Germany groaned under from Italian pride and Papal greed. The reply of Frederick to De Vio was in reality the same with that of Luther — "Prove the errors which you allege" — a reply which deepened the mortification and crowned the misfortunes of the cardinal.

To the unhappy De Vio, and the cause which he represented, one calamity followed another in rapid succession. The day following that on which the Elector Frederick dispatched his letter to the legate, Luther's narrative of the Augsburg interview, which he had been some time carefully preparing, issued from the press. The elector had requested Luther to withhold it for a little while, and the Reformer was firmly purposed to do so. But the eagerness of the public and the cupidity of the printers overreached his caution. The printing-house was besieged by a crowd of all ranks and ages, clamoring for copies. The sheets were handed out wet from the press, and as each sheet was produced a dozen hands were stretched out to clutch it. The author was the last person to see his own production. In a few days the pamphlet was spread far and near.

Luther had become not the doctor of Wittemberg only, but of all Germany. The whole nation, not less than the youth in the university, had been drawn into the study of theology. Through the printing-press Luther's voice reached every hearth and every individual in the Fatherland. It was a new life that men were breathing; it was a new world that was opening to their eyes; it was a new influence, unfelt for ages, that was stirring their souls; the ancient yoke was being broken and cast away. In the university especially the theology of the Holy Scriptures was being studied with an ardor and a perseverance to which we can find in later times no parallel. Professors and students, kindled with the enthusiasm of Luther, if they could not keep pace with, strove to follow him as closely as possible.

With each new day came a new batch of students, till the halls of the university and the accommodation at Wittemberg overflowed. Not from Germany only, but from far countries, came these youths to receive here the seed of a reformed life, and to bear it thence and scatter it over regions remote.

Great attention was given to the study of Hebrew and Greek, "the two languages which, like porters, sit at the entrance of the Bible, holding the keys." From the university the passion for theological study passed to the court. The elector's secretary, Spalatin, in his correspondence with Luther, was perpetually asking and receiving expositions of scripture, and it was believed that behind the secretary's shadow sat the elector himself, quietly but earnestly prosecuting that line of inquiry which was ultimately to place him by the side of Luther.

Not standing idly by while his power diminished, the Pontiff issued a new decretal, in which he sanctioned afresh the doctrine of indulgences, and virtually confirmed all that Tetzel first and Cardinal Cajetan next had taught on the head of the Church's power to

pardon sin. The edict ran as follows: — "That the Roman Church, the mother of all Churches, had handed down by tradition that the Roman Pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, by the power of the keys — that is, by removing the guilt and punishment due for actual sins by indulgence — can for reasonable causes grant to the faithful of Christ, whether in this life or in purgatory, indulgences out of the superabundance of the merits of Christ and the saints; can confer the indulgence by absolution, or transfer it by suffrage. And all those who have acquired indulgences, whether alive or dead, are released from so much temporal punishment for their actual sins as is the equivalent of the acquired indulgence. This doctrine is to be held and preached by all, under penalty of excommunication, from which only the Pope can absolve, save at the point of death."

The decree of the Pope actually helped to overthrow the system it was meant to uphold. It compelled Luther to go deeper than he had yet ventured to do in his investigations into the Papacy. He now looked at its foundations. The doctrine of indulgences in its sacrilegious and blasphemous form he had believed to be the doctrine of Tetzel only; now he saw it to be the doctrine of Leo of Rome as well. Leo had endorsed Tetzel's and Cajetan's interpretation of the matter. The conclusion to which Luther's studies were tending is indicated in a letter which he wrote about this time to his friend Wenceslaus Link at Nuremberg: "The conviction is daily growing upon me," says he, "that the Pope is Antichrist."

The conclusion was in due time reached. The Reformer drew up another appeal, and on Sunday, the 28th of November, he read it aloud in Corpus Christi Chapel, in the presence of a notary and witnesses. "I appeal," he said, "from the Pontiff, as a man liable to error, sin, falsehood, vanity, and other human infirmities — not above scripture, but under scripture — to a future Council to be legitimately convened in a safe place, so that a proctor deputed by me may have safe access." This appeal marks a new stage in Luther's enlightenment. The Pope is, in fact, abjured: Luther no longer appeals from Leo ill-informed to Leo well-informed, but from the Papal authority itself to that of a General Council, from the head of the Church to the Church herself.

Rome was not yet prepared to proceed to extremities. She had not fully fathomed the depth of the movement. Scarce an age was there in the past, but some rebellious priest had threatened his sovereign lord, but all such attempts against the Pontiff had been in vain. The Wittemberg movement would, like a tempest, exhaust itself, and the waves would dash harmlessly against the rock of the Church. True, the attempts of Leo to compose the Wittemberg troubles had so far been without result, or rather had made the matter worse; but, like the conjurer in the tale, Rome had not one only, but a hundred tricks; she had diplomatists to flatter, and she had red hats to dazzle those whom it might not be convenient as yet to burn, and so she resolved on making one other trial at conciliation.

The person pitched upon to conduct the new operation was Charles Miltitz. Cajetan was too stately, too haughty, too violent; Miltitz was not likely to split on this rock. He was the chamberlain of the Pope: a Saxon by birth, but he had resided so long at Rome as to have become a proficient in Italian craft, to which he added a liking for music. The new

envoy was much more of a diplomatist than a theologian. This, however, did not much matter, seeing he came not to discuss knotty points, but to lavish caresses and lay snares. As he was a German by birth, it was supposed he would know how to manage the Germans.

Miltitz's errand to Saxony was not avowed. He did not visit the elector's court on Luther's business; not at all. He was the bearer from the Pope to Frederick of the "golden rose," a token of regard which the Pope granted only to the most esteemed of his friends, and being solicitous that Frederick should believe himself of that number, and knowing that he was desirous of receiving this special mark of Papal affection, he sent Miltitz this long road, with the precious and much-coveted gift. Being on the spot he might as well try his hand at arranging "brother Martin's" business. But no one was deceived. "The Pope's chamberlain comes," said Luther's friends to him, "laden with flattering letters and Pontifical briefs, the cords with which he hopes to bind you and carry you to Rome." "I await the will of God," replied the Reformer.

On his journey Miltitz made it his business to ascertain the state of public feeling on the question now in agitation. He was astonished to find the hold which the opinions of Luther had taken on the German mind. In all companies he entered, in the way-side taverns, in the towns, in the castles where he lodged, he found the quarrel between the monk and the Pope the topic of talk. Of every five Germans three were on the side of Luther. How different the mental state on this side the Alps from the worn-out Italian mind!

Miltitz reached Saxony in the end of the year 1518, but his reception at Frederick's court was not of a kind to inspire him with high hopes. The elector's ardor for the "golden rose" had cooled; its fragrance had been spoiled by the late breezes from Augsburg and Rome, and he gave orders that it should be delivered to him through one of the officers of the palace. The letters which Miltitz carried to Spalatin and Pfeffinger, the elector's councilors, though written with great fervor, did but little to thaw the coldness of these statesmen. The envoy must reserve all his strength for Luther himself, that was clear; and he did reserve it, and to such purpose that he came much nearer gaining his point than Cajetan had done. The movement was in less danger when the tempest appeared about to burst over it, than now when the clouds had rolled away, and the sun again shone out.

Miltitz was desirous above all things of having a personal interview with Luther. His wish was at last gratified, and the envoy and the monk met each other in the house of Spalatin at Altenberg. The courtier exhausted all the wiles of which he was master. He was not civil merely, he was gracious; he fawned upon Luther. Tetzl, he said, had gone beyond his commission; he had done the thing scandalously, and he did not greatly wonder that Luther had been provoked to oppose him. Even the Archbishop of Mainz was not without blame, in putting the screw too tightly upon Tetzl as regarded the money part of the business. Still the doctrine of indulgences was a salutary one; from that doctrine the German people had been seduced, and they had been so by the course which he, Luther, had felt it his duty to pursue. Would he not confess that herein he had erred, and restore peace to the Church? — a matter, the envoy assured him, that lay very much

upon his heart.

Luther boldly answered that the chief offender in this business was neither Tetzel nor the Archbishop of Mainz, but the Pope himself, who, while he might have given the pallium freely, had put upon it a price so exorbitant as to tempt the archbishop to employ Tetzel to get the money for him by hook or by crook. "But as for a retraction," said Luther in a very firm tone, "never expect one from me."

A second and a third interview followed, and Miltitz, despairing of extorting from Luther a recantation, professed to be satisfied with what he could get; and he got more than might have been expected. It is evident that the arts of the envoy, his well-simulated fairness and moderation, and the indignation, not wholly feigned, which he expressed against Tetzel, had not been without their effect upon the mind of Luther. The final arrangement came to was that neither side should write or act in the question; that Luther should revoke upon proof of his errors, and that the matter should be referred to the judgment of an enlightened bishop. The umpire ultimately chosen was the Archbishop of Treves.

The issue to which the affair had been brought was one that threatened disaster to the cause. It seemed to prelude a shelving of the controversy. It was gone into for that very purpose. The "Theses" will soon be forgotten; the Tetzel scandal will fade from the public memory; Rome will observe a little more moderation and decency in the sale of indulgences; and when the storm shall have blown over, things will revert to their old course, and Germany will again lie down in her chains. Happily, there was a Greater than Luther at the head of the movement.

Miltitz was overjoyed. This troublesome affair was now at an end; so he thought. His mistake lay in believing the movement to be confined to the bosom of a single monk. He could not see that it was a new life which had come down from the skies, and which was bringing on an awakening in the Church.

There came now a pause in the controversy. Luther laid aside his pen, he kept silence on indulgences; he busied himself in his chair; but, fortunately for the cause at stake, this pause was of no long duration. It was his enemies that broke the truce. Had they been wise, they would have left the monk in the fetters with which Miltitz had bound him. Not knowing what they did, they loosed his cords.

This brings us to the Leipsic Disputation, an affair that made a great noise at the time, and which was followed by vast consequences to the Reformation. Such disputations were common in that age. They were a sort of tournament in which the knights of the schools, like the knights of the Middle Ages, sought to display their prowess and win glory. They had their uses. There were then no public meetings, no platforms, no daily press; and in their absence, these disputations between the learned came in their stead, as arenas for the ventilation of great public questions.

The man who set agoing the movement when it had stopped, thinking to extinguish it,

was Doctor John Eck. He was famed as a debater all over Europe. He was Chancellor of the University of Ingolstadt; deeply read in the school-men, subtle, sophisticated, a great champion of the Papacy, transcendently vain of his dialectic powers, vaunting the triumphs he had obtained on many fields, and always panting for new opportunities of displaying his skill. A fellow-laborer of Luther, Andrew Bodenstein, better known as Carlstadt, Archdeacon of the Cathedral at Wittenberg, had answered the Obelisks of Dr. Eck, taking occasion to defend the opinions of Luther. Eck answered him, and Carlstadt again replied. After expending on each other the then customary amenities of scholastic strife, it was ultimately agreed that the two combatants should meet in the city of Leipsic, and decide the controversy by oral disputation, in the presence of George, Duke of Saxony, uncle of the Elector Frederick, and other princes and illustrious personages.

Before the day arrived for this trial of strength between Carlstadt and Eck, the latter had begun to aim at higher game. To vanquish Carlstadt would bring him but little fame; the object of Eck's ambition was to break a lance with the monk of Wittenberg, "the little monk who had suddenly grown into a giant." Accordingly, he published thirteen Theses, in which he plainly impugned the opinions of Luther.

This violation of the truce on the Roman side set Luther free; and, nothing loath, he requested permission from Duke George to come to Leipsic and take up the challenge which Eck had thrown down to him. The duke, who feared for the public peace, should two such combatants wrestle a fall on his territories, refused the request. Ultimately, however, he gave leave to Luther to come to Leipsic as a spectator; and in this capacity did the doctor of Wittenberg appear on a scene in which he was destined to fill the most prominent place.

The battle was now joined, and it continued to be waged on this and the sixteen following days. The questions discussed were of the very last importance: they were those that lie at the foundations of the two theologies, and that constitute an essential and eternal difference between the Roman and Protestant Churches, in their basis, their character, and their tendencies. The discussion was also of the last importance practically. It enabled the Reformers to see deeper than they had hitherto done into fundamentals. It convinced them that the contrariety between the two creeds was far greater than they had imagined, and that the diversity was not on the surface merely, not in the temporal wealth and spiritual assumptions of the hierarchy merely, not in the scandals of indulgences and the disorders of the Papal court merely, but in the very first principles upon which the Papal system is founded, and that the discussion of these principles leads unavoidably into an examination of the moral and spiritual condition of the race, and the true character of the very first event in human history.

The primary starting issue under discussion was this: what is the moral condition of man's will? in other words, What is the moral condition of man himself? As the will is, so is the man, for the will or heart is but a term expressive of the final outcome of the man; it is the organ which concentrates all the findings of his animal, intellectual, and spiritual nature — body, mind, and soul — and sends them forth in the form of wish and act. Is man able to choose that which is spiritually good? In other words, when sin and holiness

are put before him, and he must make his choice between the two, will the findings of his whole nature, as summed up and expressed in his choice, be on the side of holiness? Dr. Eck and the Roman theologians at Leipsic maintained the affirmative, asserting that man has the power, without aid from the Spirit of God, and simply of himself, to choose what is spiritually good, and to obey God. Luther, Carlstadt, and the new theologians maintained the negative, affirming that man lost this power when he fell; that he is now morally unable to choose holiness; and that, till his nature be renewed by the Holy Spirit, he cannot love or serve God.

This question, it is necessary to remark, is not one touching the freedom of man. About this there is no dispute. It is admitted on both sides, the Popish and Protestant, that man is a free agent. Man can make a choice; there is neither physical nor intellectual constraint upon his will, and having made his choice he can act conformably to it. This constitutes man a moral and responsible agent. But the question is one touching the moral ability of the will. Granting our freedom of choice, have we the power to choose good? Will the perceptions, bias, and desires of our nature, as summed up and expressed by the will, be on the side of holiness as holiness? They will not, says the Protestant theology, till the nature is renewed by the Holy Spirit. The will may be physically free, it may be intellectually free, and yet, by reason of the bias to sin and aversion to holiness which the Fall planted in the heart, the will is not morally free; it is dominated over by its hatred of holiness and love of sin, and will not act in the way of preferring holiness and loving God, till it be rid of the spiritual incapacity which hatred of what is good inflicts upon it. But let us return to the combatants in the arena at Leipsic. Battle has already been joined, and we find the disputants stationed beside the deepest sources of the respective theologies, only half conscious of the importance of the ground they occupy, and the far-reaching consequences of the propositions for which they are respectively to fight.

"Man's will before his conversion," says Carlstadt, "can perform no good work. Every good work comes entirely and exclusively from God, who gives to man first the will to do, and then the power of accomplishing."

Such was the proposition maintained at one end of the hall. It was a very old proposition, though it seemed new when announced in the Pleisenberg hall, having been thoroughly obscured by the schoolmen. The Reformers could plead Augustine's authority in behalf of their proposition; they could plead a yet greater authority, even that of Paul. The Apostle had maintained this proposition both negatively and positively. He had described the "carnal mind" as "enmity against God;" (Romans 8:7, 8) He had spoken of the understanding as "darkness," and of men as "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." This same doctrine he had put also in the positive form.

"It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."
(Philippians 2:13)

Our Savior has laid down a great principle which amounts to this, that corrupt human nature by itself can produce nothing but what is corrupt, when he said,

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John 3:6)

And the same great principle is asserted, with equal clearness, though in figurative language, when he says, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." And were commentary needed to bring out the full meaning of this statement, we have it in the personal application which the apostle makes of it to himself.

"For I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwelleth no good thing."
(Romans 7:18)

If then man's whole nature be corrupt, said the Reformer, nothing but what is corrupt can proceed from him, till he be quickened by the Spirit of God. Antecedently to the operations of the Spirit upon his understanding and heart, he lacks the moral power of loving and obeying God, and of effecting anything that may really avail for his deliverance and salvation; and he who can do nothing for himself must owe all to God.

At the other end of the hall, occupying the pulpit over which was suspended the representation of St. George and the dragon, rose the tall portly form of Dr. Eck. With stentorian voice and animated gestures, he repudiates the doctrine which has just been put forth by Carlstadt. Eck admits that man is fallen, that his nature is corrupt, but he declines to define the extent of that corruption; he maintains that it is not universal, that his whole nature is not corrupt, that man has the power of doing some things that are spiritually good; and that, prior to the action of God's Spirit upon his mind and heart, man can do works which have a certain kind of merit, the merit of congruity even; and God rewards these good works done in the man's own strength, with grace by which he is able to do what still remains of the work of his salvation.

The combatants at the one end of the hall fight for salvation by grace — grace to the entire exclusion of human merit: salvation of God. The combatants at the other end fight for salvation by works, a salvation beginning in man's own efforts and good works, and these efforts and good works running along the whole line of operation; and though they attract to them supernatural grace, and make it their yoke-fellow as it were, yet themselves substantially and meritoriously do the work. This is salvation of man.

Thus the controversy came to rage around this one point — Has the Will the power to choose and to do what is spiritually good? This, they said, was the whole controversy between Romanism and Protestantism. All the lines of argument on both sides flowed out of, or ran up into, this one point. It was the greatest point of all in theology viewed on the side of man; and according as it was to be decided, Romanism is true and Protestantism is false, or Protestantism is true and Romanism is false.

"I acknowledge," said Eck, who felt himself hampered in this controversy by opinions favorable to the doctrine of grace which, descending from the times of Augustine, and maintained though imperfectly and inconsistently by some of the schoolmen, had lingered in the Church of Rome till now — "I acknowledge that the first impulse in man's conversion proceeds from God, and that the will of man in this instance is entirely

passive."

"Then," asked Carlstadt, who thought that he had won rite argument, "after this first impulse which proceeds from God, what follows on the part of man? Is it not that which Paul denominates will, and which the Fathers entitle consent?"

"Yes," answered the Chancellor of Ingolstadt, "but this consent of man comes partly from our natural will and partly from God's grace" — thus recalling what he appeared to have granted; making man a partner with God in the origination of will or first act of choice in the matter of his salvation, and so dividing with God the merit of the work.

"No," responded Carlstadt, "this consent or act of will comes entirely from God; he it is who creates it in the man."

Offended at a doctrine which so completely took away from man all cause of glorifying, Eck, feigning astonishment and anger, exclaimed, "Your doctrine converts a man into a stone or log, incapable of any action."

The Apostle had expressed it better: "dead in trespasses and sins." Yet he did not regard those in that condition whom he addressed as a stone or a log, for he gave them the motives to believe, and held them guilty before God should they reject the gospel.

A log or a stone! it was answered from Carlstadt's end of the hall. Does our doctrine make man such? does it reduce him to the level of an irrational animal? By no means. Can he not meditate and reflect, compare and choose? Can he not read and understand the statements of scripture declaring to him in what state he is sunk, that he is "without strength," and bidding him ask the aid of the Spirit of God? If he ask, will not that Spirit be given? will not the light of truth be made to shine into his understanding? and by the instrumentality of the truth, will not his heart be renewed by the Spirit, his moral bias against holiness taken away, and he become able to love and obey God? In man's capacity to become the subject of such a change, in his possessing such a framework of powers and faculties as, when touched by the Spirit, can be set in motion in the direction of good, is there not, said the Reformers, sufficient to distinguish man from a log, a stone, or an irrational animal?

The Popish divines on this head have ignored a distinction on which Protestant theologians have always and justly laid great stress, the distinction between the rational and the spiritual powers of man.

Is it not matter of experience, the Romanists have argued, that men of themselves — that is, by the promptings and powers of their unrenewed nature — have done good actions? Does not ancient history show us many noble, generous, and virtuous achievements accomplished by the heathen? Did they not love and die for their country? All enlightened Protestant theologians have most cheerfully granted this. Man even unrenewed by the Spirit of God may be truthful, benevolent, loving, patriotic; and by the exercise of these qualities, he may invest his own character with singular gracefulness

and glory, and to a very large degree benefit his species. But the question here is one regarding a higher good, even that which the Bible denominates holiness — "without which no man can see God" — actions done conformably to the highest standard, which is the Divine law, and from the motive of the highest end, which is the glory of God. Such actions, the Protestant theology teaches, can come only from a heart purified by faith, and quickened by the Spirit of God.

On the 4th of July, Luther stepped down into the arena. He had obtained permission to be present on condition of being simply a spectator; but, at the earnest solicitations of both sides, Duke George withdrew the restriction, and now he and Eck are about to join battle. At seven o'clock in the morning the two champions appeared in their respective pulpits, around which were grouped the friends and allies of each. Eck wore a courageous and triumphant air, claiming to have borne off the palm from Carlstadt, and it was generally allowed that he had proved himself the abler disputant. Luther appeared with a nosegay in his hand, and a face still bearing traces of the terrible storms through which he had passed. The former discussion had thinned the hall; it was too abstruse and metaphysical for the spectators to appreciate its importance. Now came mightier champions, and more palpable issues. A crowd filled the Pleisenberg hall, and looked on while the two giants contended.

It was understood that the question of the Pope's primacy was to be discussed between Luther and Eck. The Reformer's emancipation from this as from other parts of the Romish system had been gradual. When he began the war against the indulgence-mongers, he never doubted that so soon as the matter should come to the knowledge of the Pope and the other dignitaries, they would be as forward as himself to condemn the monstrous abuse. To his astonishment, he found them throwing their shield over it, and arguing from scripture in a way that convinced him that the men whom he had imagined as sitting in a region of serene light, were in reality immersed in darkness. This led him to investigate the basis of the Roman primacy, and soon he came to the conclusion that it had no foundation whatever in either the early Church or in the Word of God. He denied that the Pope was head of the Church by Divine right, though he was still willing to grant that he was head of the Church by human right — that is, by the consent of the nations.

Eck opened the discussion by affirming that the Pope's supremacy was of Divine appointment. His main proof, as it is that of Romanists to this hour, was the well-known passage, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church." Luther replied, as Protestants at this day reply, that it is an unnatural interpretation of the words to make Peter the rock; that their natural and obvious sense is, that the truth Peter had just confessed — in other words Christ himself — is the rock; that Augustine and Ambrose had so interpreted the passage, and that therewith agree the express declarations of Scripture —

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;"(1 Corinthians 3:11)

and that Peter himself terms Christ

"the chief corner-stone, and a living stone on which we are built up a spiritual house."(1 Peter 2:4, 5, 6)

It is unnecessary to go into the details of the disputation. The line of argument, so often traversed since that day, has become very familiar to Protestants. But we must not overlook the perspicacity and courage of the man who first opened the path, nor the wisdom which taught him to rely so confidently on the testimony of scripture, nor the independence by which he was able to emancipate himself from the trammels of a servitude sanctioned by the submission of ages.

Luther in this disputation labored under the disadvantage of having to confront numerous quotations from the false decretals. That gigantic forgery, which forms so large a part of the basis of the Roman primacy, had not then been laid bare; nevertheless, Luther looking simply at the internal evidence, in the exercise of his intuitive sagacity, boldly pronounced the evidence produced against him from this source spurious. He even retreated to his stronghold, the early centuries of Christian history, and especially the Bible, in neither of which was proof or trace of the Pope's supremacy to be discovered. When the doctor of Ingolstadt found that despite his practiced logic, vast reading, and ready eloquence, he was winning no victory, and that all his arts were met and repelled by the simple massive strength, knowledge of scripture, and familiarity with the Fathers which the monk of Wittenberg displayed, he was not above a discreditable ruse. He essayed to raise a prejudice against Luther by charging him with being "a patron of the heresies of Wyckliffe and Huss." The terrors of such an accusation, we in this age can but faintly realize. The doctrines of Huss and Jerome still lay under great odium in the West; and Eck hoped to overwhelm Luther by branding him with the stigma of Bohemianism. The excitement in the hall was immense when the charge was hurled against him; and Duke George and many of the audience half rose from their seats, eager to catch the reply.

Luther well knew the peril in which Eck had placed him, but he was faithful to his convictions. "The Bohemians," he said, "are schismatics; and I strongly reprobate schism: the supreme Divine right is charity and unity. But among the articles of John Huss condemned by the Council of Constance, some are plainly most Christian and evangelical, which the universal Church cannot condemn." Eck had unwittingly done both Luther and the Reformation a service. The blow which he meant should be a mortal one had severed the last link in the Reformer's chain. Luther had formerly repudiated the primacy of the Pope, and appealed from the Pope to a Council. Now he publicly accuses a Council of having condemned what was "Christian" — in short, of having erred. It was clear that the infallible authority of Councils, as well as that of the Pope, must be given up. Henceforward Luther stands upon the authority of scripture alone.

The gain to the Protestant movement from the Leipsic discussion was great. Duke George, frightened by the charge of Bohemianism, was henceforward its bitter enemy. There were others who were incurably prejudiced against it. But these losses were more than balanced by manifold and substantial gains. The views of Luther were henceforward clearer. The cause got a broader and firmer foot-hold. Of those who sat on the benches,

many became its converts. The students especially were attracted by Luther, and forsaking the University of Leipsic, flocked to that of Wittenberg. Some names, that afterwards were among the brightest in the ranks of the Reformers, were at this time enrolled on the evangelical side — Poliander, Cellarius, the young Prince of Anhalt, Cruciger, and Melancthon.

The war at Leipsic, then, was no affair of outposts merely. It raged round the very citadel of the Roman system. The first assault was directed against that which emphatically is the key of the Roman position, its deepest foundation as a theology — namely, man's independence of the grace of God. For it is on the doctrine of man's ability to begin and — with the help of a little supplemental grace, conveyed to him through the sole channel of the Sacraments — to accomplish his salvation, that Rome builds her scheme of works, with all its attendant penances, absolutions, and burdensome rites. The second blow was struck at that dogma which is the corner-stone of Rome as a hierarchy — the Pope's primacy.

The Reformers strove to overthrow both, that they might substitute — for the first, GOD, as the sole Author of man's salvation; and for the second, CHRIST as the sole Monarch of the Church.

Luther returned from Leipsic a freer, a nobler, and a more courageous man. The fetters of Papalism had been rent. He stood erect in the liberty wherewith the Gospel makes all who receive and follow it free. He no longer bowed to Councils; he no longer did reverence to the "chair" set up at Rome, and to which the ages had listened, believing the voice that proceeded from it to be the voice of God. Luther now acknowledged no infallible guide on earth save the Bible. From this day forward there was a greater power in every word and a greater freedom in every act of the Reformer.

Once more in the midst of his friends at Wittenberg, Luther's work was resumed. Professors and students soon felt the new impetus derived from the quickened and expanded views which the Reformer had brought back with him from his encounter with Eck. The drama is now about to widen, and new actors are about to step upon the stage.

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The on-line resources of Historicism Research Foundation at <http://www.historicism.net/> also proved invaluable for my understanding of Biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy concerning Christian church history, especially as revealed in the book of Revelation, serves as the foundation upon which all church histories should be based.